The Poetics of Glaze
Ceramic Surface and the Perception of Depth

EMMANUEL BOOS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Royal College of Art for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2011

The Royal College of Art

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

1. During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification.
2. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

E. Boos

September 2011

TABLE OF CONTENT

Material emotion – Celadons – Monet's Water Lilies – Kolding Classification

Glazes at Play

From transitional space to play – A theory of play with ceramic glazes – Enclosed objects, cobblestones, Edge – The domestic objects - Transitional – Surprising – Non-seductive – Exciting - Precariousness – Aesthetics of precariousness – Poetics of Play – Surrealist ludic – Dissent and 'undecidability' – 'Jouissance' – Love and desire

The Making of the Poetic Space

Mythologies – Blacksmithing vs. pottery – Gender - Jealousy – Conservatism and secrecy – Cooking fire and potter's kiln - Ceramics by accident – unself-consciousness – accidents – process – carcks – transitional space – Dialectic of internality and externality - Shaping the void – Definitions – Artistic practices – The vessel – Interiority – The planes

SUMMARY

My research into the visual and aesthetic qualities of ceramic glaze investigates its ability to create an impression of depth. In the first part of my MPhil I gained a technical understanding of the 'fish scale' glaze and the way it can create a sense of perspectival depth through cracks in the glaze superimposed on one another. To test the ability of the glaze to provoke the illusion of spatial depth I developed a body of work of enclosed ceramic objects. It became apparent, however, that perspectival depth alone can not fully account for my artistic concerns, and that the requirements of the illusory are at odds with some of my major artistic preoccupations such as an interest for accidents and imprecision in material rendering. Other types of glaze I have investigated include mutton-fat celadons, which are blurry, unclear, with a cloudy translucence that takes the eye into and beyond the surface. While these glazes also provoke an impression of depth, this is not perspectival and I raised the hypothesis of a poetic dimension of depth, posing the research question of this project:

"What is poetic depth in a ceramic glaze?"

Following a first series of slab pieces and an attempt at making automatic pieces, I developed new enclosed objects with underlying structures distinguishable on the glazed surface after firing. This series pointed out to interiority as a major concern of the poetic but it further unveiled the poetic tension, a dialectic process between author-ity (the ability to control) and

subjectivity on the one hand and factors of dissent questioning the centrality of the author on the other: the unconscious, the objectification of the subject and formal indistinctness in the wake of a meditation upon matter from the perspective of its depth. With the support of Gaston Bachelard's approach of material imagination, Julia Kristeva's theorizing of the writing subject and Jacques Lacan's concept of the Gaze, I attempted to show how my practice of glaze partakes to that poetic tension.

An endeavour to classify and test the profundity of my glazes systematically triggered an on-going installation which I have pursued throughout the research. On an invariant slip casted enclosed form (a cobblestone with ridge) I have referenced variables of my studio-practice: glaze recipes, materials, kilns and firing schedules. The result provided an outcome akin to a scientific process of ordering in the form of a library of objects documenting studio practice. This process of classification also highlighted the drip as a recurring element of my practice of glazes. Through the ambivalence of the solid liquidity of the glaze drop, a re-enactment and an objectification of fusion, I interpreted glaze as a transitional space in the Winnicottian sense; an intermediate area of experience between the self and the world, emotion and matter, and between the illusion of fusion and magical control on the one side and the disillusion of a confrontation with objectivity on the other.

In the wake of this transitional process, I began to play. I played with found objects of the everyday – a bunch of bananas, a steam iron, an inverted jug and a frying pan - and the piece that resulted – Edge - revealed another

dimension of poetic practice: license, dissidence and an excess of flux. Edge, the Dionysian followed the Apollonian ordering of the cobblestones to reveal a contemporary form of poetic tragic. Edge is an intermediate piece between work concerned primarily with the objectification of interiority and with work where play as a final development of the transitional phenomena is surprising, non-seductive, exciting and precarious. Play and the poetic can converge in the Surrealist ludic, in a shared aspiration for subversion and dissent and in the dimension of laughter.

In the last part of the research, a new series of pieces emerged: Equally “as found”, they are paper porcelain slabs or remains of slabs. Plans slightly folded, gently bent, sometimes assembled. 2D venturing timidly into 3D. 3D approaching flatness. Wall pieces? Paintings? Sculptures? As if trying to now answer the question: “How does the glazed surface plan invoke the interiority of the self?” Surface and depth. Play and substance.

Ceramics through both the aesthetics of the vessel and the practice of glaze, poetry and love are a transitional space, an unending dialectic of fusion and detachment, internality and externality, subjectivity and objectivity.

INTRODUCTION

“Hell on earth. It is the temperature where pots start to feel at home” (Girel, 2004, p.105). The sun is hot over the city and the streets on a mid-summer Saturday afternoon are now deserted. I encounter a haven of shade and freshness in an art gallery and find myself surrounded by pots, glazed ceramics. The exhibiting artist is Shimizu Uichi, a Japanese Living National Treasure. The Gallery is L’Espace Mitsukoshi Etoile in Paris. The year is 1996.

I stroll through the show. I stop. A vessel, a large bowl with a very simple and straight conic shape, has caught my eye. It is covered with a pale blue glaze. The glaze is crackled. It could very well be a defect. The crackle is peculiar but I cannot say why. It seems to me the bowl has no end, as if the glaze were an opening into something beyond the mere surface of the vessel. It is striking and for what seems to me a rather long moment, I lose myself in the contemplation of the glaze. I feel as if my mind were now travelling through the glaze. Is it floating? Is it falling? I cannot tell. When leaving the gallery, I am not sure what I have just experienced. It was probably an aesthetic and artistic shock. This encounter changed me forever and I would never be the same again. Most importantly to me then was the fact that I did not know a lot about ceramics as an art form, let alone this peculiar Japanese artist. Nevertheless I could relate directly and personally to his art and I did not look at it with the ears or though the magister of an institution. Yet the encounter seemed real and evident. It made it all the more important and significant.

“Almost all those who really feel for the arts do a little bit more than just feeling for them; they can not escape the need to deepen their pleasure” (Valéry, 1957, p.1235).

Three years later, in 1999 I would start an apprenticeship to become a potter and in 2006 I embarked on a PhD at the Royal College of Art whose starting point was that very glaze I had encountered that hot summer afternoon.

In 2006 I knew that glaze was called ‘fish-scale’ and how this crazing behaviour provoked an impression of depth. I did not yet know how to reproduce it however. I believed it was technological know-how I was after.

Within the field of ceramics, the depth of a glaze is a sought after quality. But what exactly does depth of a ceramic glaze describe and qualify? Does it apply to the surface of the glaze? Is it a technical term? Is it the capacity to provoke an illusion? Is it an aesthetic concept? Is it a psychological one? Is it linked to the maker or/and the viewer?

“We must somewhat slightly and superficially pour the world and slide through it, and not force it” wrote Montaigne (Montaigne, 1595 cited in Richard 1955, p.12). Maurice Blanchot commenting this quote by Montaigne prescribed that literature [art] should evade depth (Richard, 1955, p.12) and today the quest for depth in art is still seen with great caution. Contemporary art practice is often provocatively superficial. Is it rightly so? Certainly the quest for depth can be a pretext for nostalgia, a field for gratuity, a haven for complacency or

escape (Richard, 1955) but also regression and all forms of solipsism and self-indulgence. Certainly irony, humour, lightness on the one hand and rationalism and scientific approach on the other allow for a necessary distance and critical thinking that shall prevent the temptation of mysticism depth is so often associated with. Yet, it is hard to believe we can now do away with depth.

> It is depth and depth alone which will allow surface, which will be a base for a relation, the happy flow between different consciousness, the free spreading of surfaces, the pairing of forms, the true contact […] For all poets try to travel through depth and emerge delivered and fraternal. One way or another, all throw themselves into what has no name, the impossible, into death, and later or at the same time emerge alive. Paradoxical experience and yet one redone and succeeded every day, which links [art] to the impossibility of [art] and links the being to an active intimacy with the void (Richard, 1955, p.12).

APPROACHING THE MATERIAL

Traditionally, research into glazes focuses on aspects of material science, craftsmanship or archeology or art history, and optical depth has been the object of investigations on the microstructure of glaze. By seeking to address the aesthetic dimension of glaze I am moving away from such concerns.

The aesthetics of ceramic glaze is a new field of research with little existing material and when confronting the question of how to address glaze and the perception of its depth, I faced a real difficulty, conceptually and in terms of research epistemology.

Glaze is only an element of a ceramic object, its surface, what covers it and it is difficult if not impossible to dissociate it from the form it sits on. Technically however it is not impossible to produce pure glaze without any supporting body. Were glaze to be considered by itself as a pure glaze, dissociated from the form or body it covers (practically or conceptually), it is likely to remain a form. Yet I wished to approach the glaze individually, regardless of the form it covers or it has. I need a paradigm through which the concerns for the form will become secondary, a paradigm that will endow the glaze, as a material, a centrality. But it is a real challenge for an artistic research concerned with the creation of three-dimensional objects to think, conceptualize and create formal indistinctness.

I could have limited the research to the technical dimensions addressed by material science. Through material science I can articulate a scientific depth measurable systematically in quality and quantity by means of a scientific process or instrument (i.e. the path length of light).

There is also the possibility of an art-historical approach where the notion of depth shall be used comparatively by referencing established canons of deep ceramic glazes. This approach initially based on research within the field of archaeology, is also referring to the above scientific approach of depth.

These two approaches could be classified as literal (or objective) because they assume they can describe the world unequivocally as it is. Language is transparent and invisible as if it were a window through which we see the world outside and express ideas that exist without it. Within this literal approach the artist's main task would be to recreate the world or at least to create an illusion of the world. In the present research, this means creating the illusion of depth.

Early in the research those literal approaches have become dead ends.

The depth I am after is not literal. It does not aim to create an illusion.

I need another paradigm.

Among aesthetics or art theories, paradigms too often dismiss the material as secondary, a simple mean to a form. It seems a no man's land, where nowhere to think the centrality of the material.

In the XVIth century, Giordano Bruno developed a philosophy that endowed the material with a new position. The radical character of his views have been praised by Jochen Winter (Winter, 1999): The hierarchy between material and form was put an end to. Material becomes a creating principle. Traditionally, the material, which has no form, is being given a form from outside. With Bruno, material and form cannot be separated. Cause and effect are now confounded. Material produces forms from within. Forms are contained within the material. Both are thought not as a pair but as unity. God is both exterior and interior to creation, cause and principle, transcendental and immanent. Whereas God is traditionally thought as craftsman of the world, he becomes with Bruno the 'artist within' the one who shapes material from within. There is a new identity between will and material, which excludes free and arbitrary will. There is an identity between power and being of God, between liberty and necessity. This reconciliation is dyonisiac and leads to an art of the accidental, of the furious. With Bruno, beauty has become a bursting, epiphanic and vitalist. Man loses its privilege in ontology. Man is not at the centre. He is at the centre in a system where God is thought as an image of Man. But Man has lost its prima. Man cooperates with nature. He is at best magician, alchemist and only partakes to the metamorphic display of matter. Man's destiny is to coincide with nature.

The burning of Giordano Bruno in Rome in 1600 shows the potent of dissent in this approach. Unlike the views of Galileo, which eventually prevailed, the views of Giordano Bruno have remained marginal and little known in spite of their significance.

Besides Bruno, there are other approaches still, approaches that could be defined as literary (or subjective). Literary because for them language can doubtfully render an objective truth. Those approaches reject the idea of transparency of language and point out its arbitrary character and its materiality. Language is one of the materials of subjectivity. Among those literary/subjective approaches are psychoanalysis and poetry. The two differ greatly. They can even be opposed. The French philosopher Gaston Bachelard has however used them together in a series of six books on material elements.

Bachelard's originality lays in his psychoanalyzing of elements. "Material elements reflect our souls; more than forms, they fix the unconscious, they provide us with a sort of direct reading of our destiny" (Gaudin, 1987, p. xxxvii). Bachelard's psychoanalytical approach consists in a psychoanalysis of scientific knowledge of material elements and "he directs his psychoanalysis toward the archetypal aspects of the material universe rather than the subjective pressures of an individual past" (Gaudin, 1987, p. xlv). It is a critical approach of the immediate object of inquiry (the material elements) and thoughts associated with it to sever objectivity from individual and especially archetypal subjectivity. "To start with, everything must be called into question:

sensation, common sense, usage however constant, even etymology, for words, which are made for singing and enchanting, rarely make contact with thought" (Bachelard, 1987a, p.1). Bachelard calls for a sense of irony instead of marvelling at the object and he opposes "to the enthusiastic, poetic mind the taciturn scientific mind" (Bachelard, 1987a, p.1). This psychoanalysis of the material elements was first attempted in 'The Psychoanalysis of Fire' but Bachelard writes:

> It would not be difficult to write about water, air, earth, salt, wine and blood in the same way that we have dealt with fire in this brief outline […] they too bear a false stamp, the false weight of unquestioned values. […] Everyone should seek to destroy within himself these blindly accepted convictions. Everyone must destroy even more carefully than his phobias, his 'phillias', his complacent acceptance of first intuitions. […] No progress is possible in the acquisition of objective knowledge without this self-critical irony (Bachelard, 1987a, p. 6).

Following Bachelard's invitation, can I undertake a psychoanalysis of the glaze material? What are within the field of ceramic glazes these blindly accepted convictions, these mental habits formed by practice and unquestioned processes? Do they impede objective knowledge? Is the concept of glazes' depth one of them? What does then depth conceal?

But before following Bachelard's urge to use psychoanalysis any further, it is important to point out that Bachelard's invitation is problematic. It was short-lived. His first ambition collided with his later interest for poetry and material imagination. Towards the end of the book 'The Psychoanalysis of Fire', Bachelard has completed his conversion to imagination: "Imagination is the true source of psychic production. Psychically, we are created by our reverie" (Bachelard, 1987a, p.110). How could reverie become a creative mental process if psychoanalysis heals and suppresses the unconscious? But instead of discarding Bachelard's use of psychoanalysis, one should bear in mind that his research always alternates between science and poetry. In science, the role of psychoanalysis is to suppress errors whereas in art, there is no healing sought. Within the field of art, Bachelard's use of psychoanalysis would aim at creation not repression and psychoanalysis would consist in understanding but only to better follow the developments of material imagination.

Material imagination is "this amazing need for penetration which, going beyond the attractions of the imagination of forms, thinks matter, dreams in it, lives in it, or, in other words, materializes the imaginary" (Bachelard, 1943, p. 14).

Literary expression, and especially poetry, contains for Bachelard the essential characteristics of imagination because the poet is not tied to a bare representation of what is true and the essence of poetry is the creation of new images. Bachelard traces poetic imagery to some of its unconscious archetypes, to show the interconnectedness of dream and matter.

Yet, Bachelard's specific methodology and its extensive use of material-related poetry to investigate material imagination cannot be of any help in the case of ceramic glazes. Bachelard relies exclusively on existing poems. Whereas those are plentiful when dealing with water, air, earth or fire, poems dealing with ceramic glazes are scarce if any.

Bachelard has investigated material imagination through poetry, but for the practicing artist that I am not ceasing to be throughout the research, it is first of all the encounter with materials and the process of glaze which can generate a way through which to experience and materialize my own material imagination and the relationship between the inner world and the outer world. The inner world is being experienced through and within the outer world, through materials, ceramics and the process of glaze. This relation because it produces such insights into material imagination and the unconscious can generate a sense of depth. But is the process of glaze to me what poetry was to Bachelard: another medium to investigate the unconscious and material imagination? What is the exact status of poetry: a mean or an end?

Could it be both?

Not only is there a possible analogy between the creation of a poem and that of a ceramic artwork (polysemy, use of metaphors, open-endedness, springing creative act…) but the ceramic artwork and the glaze material themselves might be seen as poetry:

> The word poetry imports something quite peculiar in its nature; something which may exist in what is called prose as well as in verse; something which does not even require the instrument of words, but can speak through the other audible symbols called musical sounds, and even through the visible ones which are the language of sculpture, painting, and architecture (Mill, 1833).

Further, an investigation of poetry's nature might prove very useful in both making the artwork and dealing critically with it. As an example of how this investigation into the nature of the poetic might prove useful, I shall apply to my artworks John Stuart Mill's suggestion that "the object of poetry is confessedly to act upon the emotions" (Mill, 1833). This assumption leads me to investigating how a visual artwork can elicit an emotive answer. What is the mechanics of its emotive power? Joshua Taylor on the 'Matter Paintings' of Antoni Tàpies alludes to "a compelling sense of fragility […] a condition of imprecision rather than precision, of openness rather than control, which could influence the emotive power of a material artefact" (Taylor [no date], cited in Shotton, 2007, p.93).

This is just an example. Other assertions on poetry that could become part of this research include Christopher Fry's statement "Poetry is the language in which man explores his own amazement" (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1969, p.91).

For Bachelard, not only poetry but also rêverie is an important source of material imagination.

Through it comes directly from the French language, rêverie is also an English word much more common than its fully Anglicized version, revery, comparativel rare. It is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (1971, p.1252) as:

- "A state of joy or delight
- A fantastic, fanciful, unpractical or purely theoretical idea or notion
- A fit of abstracted musing; a "brown study" or day-dream
- The fact, state or condition of being lost in thought or engaged in musing"

For Bachelard, the rêverie originates the creative process and I believe it is also an important part of my work-process as any patient and repetitive type of work incorporating many monotonous operations, leads man to rêverie who then incorporates his reveries and songs to the material he is working on (Bachelard, 1938, p.123).

But how to render rêverie in words or images and whether to incorporate it or not in this research remain difficult questions. Probably, the artwork best encapsulates those delicate movements of the mind.

Bachelard's approach is unique. It is ground-breaking in many ways. It builds bridges between poetry and science, the conscious and the unconscious, material and psyche, inner and outer world. Bachelard certainly shows me a very useful way for my research and thanks to his philosophy both materials and depth can be approached beyond mere literality and formal concerns.

“Meditated upon from the perspective of its depth, matter is the very principle that can dissociate itself from forms” (Bachelard, 1942, p. 2).

There are several possible approaches to this research. I can oppose broadly the literal/objective approach to the literary/subjective even though borders are not set and ambiguities exist. Whereas one might argue that they are not mutually exclusive and possibly complementary, I believe there is a risk in mixing up the language of science with the poetic/literary language and that one should not be translated into the other.

To prioritize possible approaches, I will first retain the poetic approach with the objective of articulating the poetic depth and of further understanding the poetic dimension of glazes and of my ceramic artworks.

However, taking into account Jean-Pierre Richard’s warning that depth is the preferred form of all mystifications, a psychoanalysis of depth (and glazes?) may be a prerequisite to my investigation. Of interest here is less a psychoanalysis of objective knowledge than a psychoanalysis of artistic obsessions so that a decision can (hopefully) be made to better follow some but also discard unwanted ones.

To that end, the British Object Relation Theory developed by the Independent Group of British Analysts will be resorted to. Especially, Donald Winnicott and Marion Milner have developed helpful concepts for the research.

The scientific and art-historical approaches though they will be resorted to at some point of this research will be dealt with as secondary.

Regarding the title of the research Poetics I would like to make a few remarks.

The concept of poetics has often been used in several and different senses. It has been applied to human activities, but also beyond this to concepts, objects, feelings, places, science: The Poetics of Space (Gaston Bachelard), The Poetics of DNA (Judith Roof), The Poetics of Mind (Raymond W. Gibbs), The Poetics of Pollution (Warwick Anderson), The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism (Sheila Delany), The Poetics of Babytalk (David S. Miall), The Poetics of Coterie (Lytle Shaw), The Poetics of the Working Class (Florence Sauders Boos), The Poetics of Melancholy (Douglas Trevor), The Poetics of Cinema (Raul Ruiz), The Poetics of the Technical Object (Alexander von Vegstack)… Such a variety is puzzling and to derive a precise meaning is difficult. It Could mean little more than 'theory' (Brogan, 1993, p.929) or 'technique'. There is a certain confusion in the concept of poetics probably due to its etymology. "The word derives from the Greek adjective poietikos, related to the noun poietes, 'maker' or 'poet' " (Macey, 2000, p.300). Consequently there is at least a double sense: that associated with production and making which can be non-literary and that associated with poetry and more broadly with the literary. The latter sense is used to address theories of literary discourse. Yet within the frame of the theory of literature it is further unclear and disputed whether poetics applies to poetry alone or also encompasses the mode of prose.

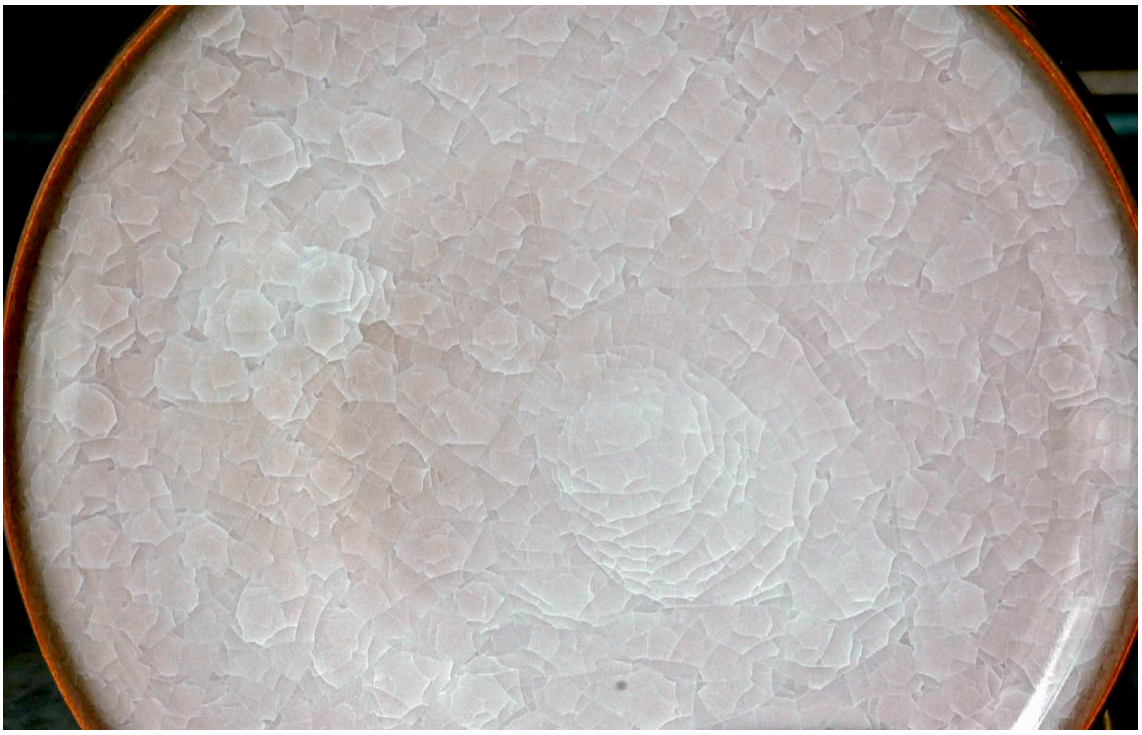
Yet this polysemy or is it an ambiguity of sense and usage, possibly also a confusion or even an erroneous use is so closely associated with the word and the concept that it can now be viewed as part of the concept. I will not take part any further in the theoretical or academic debate. In this research, the concept of poetics encompasses the two elements of its etymology: making and poetry.

For the former element, poetics as art of making, I find the concept of poetics or “poïetics” developed by Paul Valéry helpful for my research. The latter extended the traditional field of poetics to incorporate both the production of the art-work and the sensibility without which its production would not be art. In his “poïetics”, Valéry is not only interested in the production of the artworks but addresses as well its psychic and physiologic roots as well as its effects on material and people (Valéry, 1937, p.1331). It is a general idea of comprehensive human action, which I shall try to apply where possible to my research.

THE POETIC

"The poet is the part of man adverse to calculated projects. He may have to pay whatever price for this privilege or this burden. He must know that evil always come from further than we think and doesn't necessarily die on the barricade that we chose for it" (Char, 1974, p.27).

My research into the visual and aesthetic qualities of ceramic glaze has, among other topics, been concerned with investigating its ability to create an impression of depth. In the first part of my research I gained a technical understanding of the 'fish scale' glaze and the way it can create a sense of perspectival depth through overlapping flakes or cracks in the glaze superimposed on one another. Much of this research was carried out on conventional container forms, which tended to add to the impression of depth.



In order to widen the research and to explore the ability of the glaze to provoke the illusion of spatial depth on non-container forms, I developed a body of work of enclosed ceramic objects.

In the course of this investigation it became apparent that perspectival depth alone could not fully account for my artistic interest. The requirements of the illusory – in terms of control of process, materials and results – posed a dilemma as they were often at odds with some of my major artistic preoccupations such as a concern with the accidents and the imprecision in handling ceramic materials. Perspectival ambiguity is an act of perfection, the result of mastery, the performance of a conjurer. It is something like a forgery. There is certainly no ambiguity in the making. It is the opposite. It is skilful craftsmanship at its best. Perspectival ambiguity is an alternative between two forms of order and control. On the other hand, the ambiguity I am attracted to stems from openness in both the making and the meaning.

I am raising the hypothesis depth in a ceramic glaze is of another nature than the illusory and that nature is linked to the poetic. I will discuss my artworks

and the two concepts of space and depth through the perspective of their poetic dimension.

By poetic I do not mean qualities either specific to the art of writing or, very literally, linked to poetry in the form of writing on ceramics. Nor do I mean poems leading to, or proceeding from, a ceramic piece. Neither do I mean ceramic poems in the form of a rediscovery of an idiom (the idiom of ceramics or pottery). By poetic I mean qualities possibly shared with poetry but going beyond the field of literature. To start I will look at the theory and history of poetry to draw parallels with my own ceramic practice.

Throughout this research however I bear in mind the warning by the poet-potter Mary Caroline Richards: “Poetry is immense, no matter how simple it may appear. There is no need for anyone to clomp around in big shoes and say what poetry is or isn’t.” (Richards, 1964, p.80).

The poetic tension

One of the most longstanding issues in the theories of poetry in the west –and a central one for the understanding of the poetic dimension of ceramic glaze – is the debate about the making of poetry: is it or is it not an art? Here I use art in the sense of a craft with a set of rules and techniques that can be taught and learned. In this latter sense, is poetry primarily a craft as writers such as Horace, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Alexander Pope and Roger Caillois argue, or is it primarily the result of inspiration, the view taken by observers in the wake of

Plato like Longinus, Plotinus, Friedrich von Schiller, William Wordsworth, Ralph Waldo Emerson, the Surrealists and others? (Leitch, 2001, p.35).

Whereas the etymology of the word poetic (from the Greek *poiesis*, “making”) seems to suggest that poetry is a fabricated thing, the product of skills and craft, Plato’s Socrates says in Ion:

> none of the poets are masters of their subject; they are inspired, possessed, and that is how they utter all those beautiful poems. […] For a poet is an airy thing, winged and holy, and he is not able to make poetry until he becomes inspired and goes out of his mind and his intellect is no longer in him. As long as a human being has his intellect in his possession he will always lack the power to make poetry […] these beautiful poems are not human, not even from human beings, but are divine and from gods; poets are nothing but representatives of the gods, possessed by whoever possesses them (Plato, c.390 B.C.E., p.41-42).

According to this view, poetry is not an art (craft), it is a possession, alienation or at best a form of madness. Eventually, Plato banished the poets from his ideal republic as no matter how divinely inspired, he considered poets’ knowledge to be inferior to that of charioteers, fishermen, philosophers and also of artists such as painters, sculptors or musicians who could demonstrate their mastering of a craft. In Plato’s view, the poet is an outcast.

Some 2500 years later, when the Surrealist poets sought to devise methods to circumnavigate reason to reach the unconscious, they seem to have wanted to reproduce some of the madness and inspiration that Plato saw in poetry, replacing gods and divine inspiration with the power of the unconscious mind. André Breton's method of "psychic automatism," automatic writing and the use of chance all pertained to the desire to suppress and annihilate the will, reason and conscious activity altogether and reach a state of utmost passivity and receptivity. The Surrealists could be seen to embody Plato's view of poetic madness.

With an opposite valuation, the harshest critics of the Surrealists approach to poetry drew precisely on Plato's analysis of a lack of craft and techniques to criticize their work. Following Plato's heritage of distrust towards poetry, Roger Caillois, once a prominent member of the Surrealist movement and later on one of its vehement opponents, acknowledges: "I do not understand much about poetry and always felt more disposed to fight it rather than giving myself over it" (Caillois, 2003, p.264). Caillois opposes Surrealist laissez-faire:

> Here much than elsewhere people seem convinced that sincerity replaces all effort and merit. Yet nothing comes of this but wind and foam. An art that seems inclined to favour only the most facile and futile qualities over strict, severe measures leading to excellence can hardly provoke much respect (Caillois, 2003, p.264).

Not unlike Plato's rejection of the value of divine inspiration, he questions the nature of poetic inspiration developed by the Surrealists. In his essay "Impostures of poetry" Caillois opposes the cult of mystery and inspiration on the part of those claiming that a "supernatural breath inspires them and that they have learned everything directly from nature or from their heart" (Caillois, 2003, p.268).

The concept of nature or of the state of nature embodies a primitive state of rawness that Caillois thinks art should oppose:

> In art as in ethics, the crucial point is to flee nature, to replace its laws with principles reflecting a different kind of rigor. Nature is equally hostile to justice and to style. […] An artist has other ambitions. He may be seduced by the beauties flattering his gaze, yet he knows that he himself must produce something of a different kind, requiring him to take an opposite path (Caillois, 2003, p.272).

Unlike Plato however, Caillois does not go so far as to ban poets and poetry altogether and he seeks eventually to articulate an aesthetics of poetry as a craft incorporating effort, work, the achievements of intellect and will on the one hand and imagination and mystery on the other. Caillois warns the poet-craftsman: "he should relax his desire for total control. At times he should interrupt his calculations" and reach "a state of repose and self-abandonment" (Caillois, 2003, p.272).

Leading to a similar paradox is the extent to which the completely passive state the Surrealists were aiming for was ever accomplished. “There was always an editing of sorts that took place even if it was merely the rejection of the results as unsuitable or trivial” (Pendleton-Julian, 1996, p.48). Among Surrealists, too, several poets e.g. Paul Eluard advocated the craft dimension of poetry (Bancquart, 1996, p.21).

Plato’s position and to a certain extent that of the Surrealists are unequivocal in ascribing the creation of poetry to something outside the poet’s control. Yet it is difficult to rule out any involvement of the poet and Caillois – and the Surrealists, though unwillingly, embody a contradiction and/or a tension within their conception and writing of poetry. That is a tension between the requirements of an art/craft and poetic inspiration.

Poetry created outside the control of the poet challenges both the notions of art and authorship. According to this view, the poetic is for a large part a ‘found’ rather than built or constructed. The concepts of author and achievement imply unity, meaning, will and consciousness but the concept of the ‘found’ challenges these requirements and the very possibility of authorship. Whether because these requirements and authorship are deemed secondary, unnecessary or because they are believed simply not to exist is a further question and opposing/limiting factors are manifold: prevalence of God, the unconscious or nature, fragmentation, decentering, scattering of the subject. By contrast poetry has to be an art, the result of a craft. The poetic

dilemma is the result of this tension that involves the understanding of control, the role of man as an author and his centrality in the creation process.

My artistic concern with ceramic glazes shares many of the same dilemmas with poetry: an ambivalent position between an interest in limiting my own control to search for the unexpected or “found” whilst recognizing its embedment into a craft, knowledge and practice. Glaze needs to surprise me. It is difficult to plan or design a glaze as its final success often lies precisely in the surprises that occur.

Yet the glazes I use need be composed and made. Recipes and firing programmes are often complex and the result of lengthy learning processes. There is a contradiction in wanting to articulate an aesthetic based on a lack of control in a practice that is so deeply embedded within craft and skill. I do not, however, think the desire for the accidental and the will for control are mutually exclusive, although there is a tension between them. The issue is rather that of their importance relative to the artistic character of the work.

Here lies some of the confusion in the use of the word art which probably stems from ancient Greek where the same word is used to describe craft and poetry. Art is not art in the way it is conceived today and whereas a certain amount of skills is necessary, it alone does not produce art, which only emerges once skill has been acquired.

Tension does not mean a conflict that eventually eases up either by the domination of one of the terms or by the striking of a right balance. That tension is both a constitutive element of poetry and of my use of ceramic glazes and as such it never eases: “In poetry, there is always a war waging” wrote Ossip Mandelstam (Meschonnic, 2001, p.12). René Char, through the aphorism “Espouse and do not espouse your home,” (Char, 1946, p.34) points to the necessity of tension. Opposites become, from the point of view of their relationship, complementary rather than exclusive and tension is a dynamic.

Within my artistic interest in glazes, I, as the author, lose my dominating centrality. In this I share an important concern with a certain conception of poetry, which puts an emphasis on inspiration over author-ity, which raises the question of whether this implies the death of the author?

What now replaces the author and my centrality in the artistic process merits investigation. Is it nature, materials, the unconscious, a making or/and a beholding and contemplating subject? Most likely, I shall not be wholly replaced as an author but I now share my importance with a wider range of concerns and influences. All, however, are to some extent subversive as they ultimately lead to a reconsideration of the notions of subjectivity, author-ity and liberty.

> For Julia Kristeva, the poetic act fractures and disrupts established modes of signification […] and thus creates an opening for new,

> polyvalent cultural meanings. This rupture, then, is profoundly subversive, not only implying an upheaval of art forms (such as that effected by Mallarmé and Lautréamont on traditional literary discourse) but also calling for a reconfiguration of the notion of subjectivity (Leitch, 2001, p.2166).

"Poetry is always dissident" (Paz, 1976, p.166).

The unconscious

> With and after Bergson, French thinkers and especially French artists and writers sought to uncover what Habermas has called 'the unthought and hidden foundations of performing subjectivity.' In other words, they tried to locate and retrieve the sources of the self. They looked to the other of the instrumental reason that they believed dominated the world, to the authentic, original self, now conceived as hidden or obscured (Dean, 1992, p.4).

In her doctoral thesis "Revolution in Poetic Language," Julia Kristeva discusses how Lautréamont's and Mallarmé's writing practices replicated the logic of the unconscious (Kristeva, 1974) and she eventually "interpreted it as an affirmation of freedom, as an anarchic revolt against a society that extols material goods and profit" (Roudiez, 1984, p.3).

One of the central concerns of the Surrealists was to develop methods to radically alter language and subvert the conscious mind, which is dominated by reason. In the first “Surrealist Manifesto” the founding father of the movement, André Breton, defines surrealism as “psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express –verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner– the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern” (Breton, 1924, p.123). In so doing Breton emphasized the force of the unconscious in bringing poetry (and art) into being.

Acknowledging this force, Kristeva came up with the concept of ‘writing subject’ rather than ‘author’.

> Author emphasizes the conscious intent of a writer who has author-ity over the meaning of his work. […] This does not mean denying all intentionality or refusing to give a role to the conscious person who writes the work; rather, it means emphasizing that consciousness is far from dominating the process and that the writing subject is a complex heterogeneous force (Roudiez, 1984, p.8).

Following Kristeva, I propose the two operating concepts of ‘making subject’ and ‘beholding subject’ and shall apply them to my own practice.

The making subject

At one stage during the project I sought to develop an unpremeditated practice beyond the use of the potter's wheel. The use of the wheel was a central tool in my work before engaging with my research project. Throwing implies that the process and the physics of the wheel dictate a number of outcomes. Can the process of throwing really remain unpremeditated? To what extent can ignorance (innocence? Incompetence?) sustain repeated practice before losing its power? In an attempt to avoid the control of process linked to a repetitive use of the potter's wheel I developed an approach based on the use of slabs of paper porcelain. In an attempt to produce objects that were unpremeditated I used bits and pieces of cut paper-porcelain slabs left over from former premeditated constructions (which I eventually discarded) to construct at random other pieces. In their disorder those pieces suggested various psychological concern such as questioning authority, sexual anxiety, physical issues and issues of self and identity. Something had happened over which I had little control.

Significantly, they did not seem to develop around a single centre or focus but had several poles and no obvious sense of border or ending: agglomerates that had their own logic.

Grouping together pieces that were already fragmented enhanced the impression of fragmentation and disorder.

It is debatable if, following Breton, I annihilated will and conscious activity altogether to reach this, but this series of work was certainly expressive of deep feelings that could not be rationalized. After the automatism and confinement reached by my work on the wheel this making process carried a powerful sense of liberation.

Developing this approach further and engaging on a second series of random-pieces implied an element of premeditation confronting me with a similar dilemma to the one I was facing with the potter's wheel, a sort of dead-end. For this reason I had to discard the second series on the grounds of an excess of self-consciousness, feeling that the pieces were quickly becoming mannered and affected.

Eventually I developed a third series using bits and pieces that resulted from building and destroying the second one. However, I realized that I could not keep up with Breton's diktat, even by such methods as retaining only odd-numbered series. Following the Surrealists, there is always an editing of sorts, even if it only consists in making choices of which pieces should be kept and which one rejected. This does not mean however that although the total absence of volition may be beyond reach, there cannot be a difference in grade, with some pieces being a great deal more premeditated than others.

What I further retained from the process of making random objects was the investigation of the unconscious and of a space within.

This concern for a space within eventually triggered a series around the idea of inner cells, boxes and psychological spaces, which involved constructing enclosed forms with an inner structure that, in spite of being invisible, were intended to indicate their presence through the sagging of the outer skin. This work stemmed from an earlier piece made as part of the envelope series where this distortion had occurred.

The inner structures are intended not only to serve as functional supports but also to acknowledge a metaphorical dimension of space that is indicated but not seen. To my former artistic concerns I am now adding an investigation of the maker's unconscious, which, too, leads to a limitation of the domination of the conscious will of the author.

The beholding subject

From the perspective of the beholding subject, Jacques Lacan's concept of the Gaze provides useful insights on why and how the glazes that interest me can contribute to undermining further the centrality of the subject – both the maker and beholder. In this research and from the point of view of the beholder, I am concerned with blurry, unclear glazes with a cloudy translucence, like that of jade (Tanizaki, 1933).

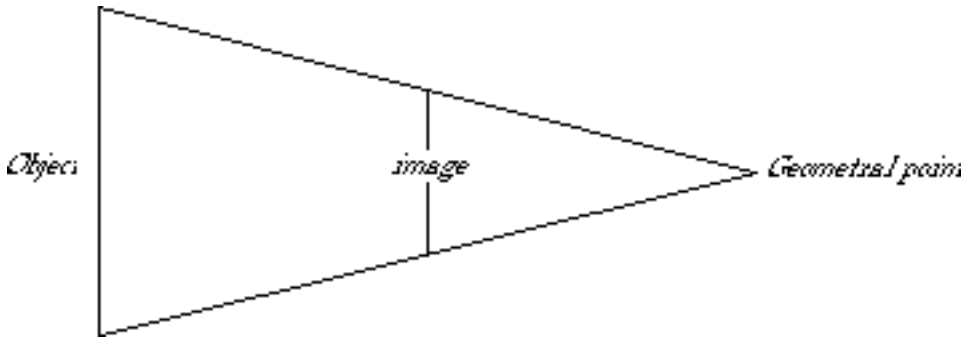
This is not unlike what Lacan describes as Gaze, which he says “always participates in the ambiguity of the jewel” (Lacan, 1964, p.96).

These types of glaze occur repeatedly in the history of ceramics:

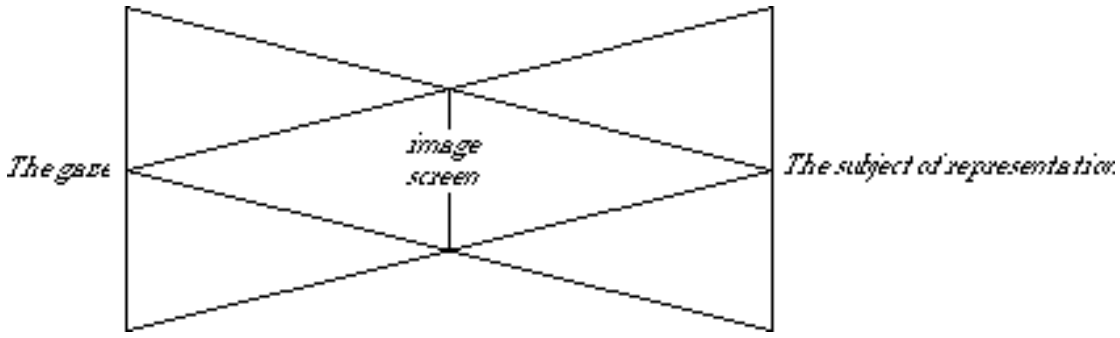
- Mutton-fat celadons under the Chinese Song dynasty have been described as captive light sources. This phenomenon results from the interactions of light with the material: increasing the path length of light through the glaze creates the illusion of translucence, opalescence and depth (Vandiver and Kingery, 1985).
- Matt and waxy glazes developed by French and Danish artist potters of the late XIXth and early XXth century can also show similar qualities.

Following Rosalind Krauss’s analysis of ‘wild light’ or ‘gleams’ (Krauss, 1997, p.242-243) some glaze can provoke a floating or roaming of perception, blurring inner and outer limits of the shell. “They act to prevent the coalescence of the Gestalt. In so doing, they also disrupt the operation of the model by which subject and object are put into reciprocity as two poles of unification: the unified ego at one end and its object at the other. Lacan has called this model ‘geometral’ and has identified its rule of perspective with the assumptions grounding the Cartesian subject” (Krauss, 1997, p.242).

The geometral model can be best illustrated by the cone of vision used in the formation of perspective during the Renaissance. The subject is the agent of vision, the point of perspective from which objects are being looked at.



Lacan creates the concept of Gaze by superimposing on this first diagram a reverted cone from the object to the subject implying that we are beings who are also looked at by objects (Lacan, 1964). In a move, which inverts the first diagram the Gaze turns the subject into object.



> The Gaze, as an irradiant surround, comes at the subject from all sides, producing the subject as a stain rather than a cogito […] And it is the very fragmentation of that 'point' of view that prevents this invisible, un-locatable Gaze from being a site of coherence, meaning, unity, Gestalt (Krauss, 1997, p.242).

The phenomenon of the Gaze outlined by Lacan can be applied to celadons and blurry glazes. Both types of glaze cause light to diffuse through the surface to glow faintly by dispersing in many directions, blurring the limits of the surface. Through the phenomena of captive light the glaze retains the

light, which then seems to reach the subject from a point behind the surface. So not only does the Gaze (of the glaze) produce the subject as a stain (by blurring outlines), but the impression of captive light in the glaze also supposes a ‘beyond’ or at least a space within, producing – at the other end of the cone – the intangible interiority in the subject, though one possibly more akin to the stain than to a centre, implying fragmentation and decentring of the subject.

Jacques Maritain proposes a definition of poetry, which expresses a similar relationship between two interiorities: “By poetry I mean, not the particular art of writing verses, but a process both more general and primary: that intercommunication between the inner being of things and the inner being of the human Self. Poetry in this sense is the secret life of each and all of the arts” (Maritain, 1953, p.3). Maritain articulates a definition including both a regard for things (the subject matter) and for the Self (whether the Self is that of the poet or of the audience is ambiguous). In so doing he opens up the possibility of a psychological – or in Maritain’s case more likely a spiritual and metaphysical – dimension of poetry, linking it up with the way poetry relates to the world of things and matter. The use of ‘inner’ and ‘secret’ relates this definition to a dimension of both depth and the poetic: that which is hidden inside from the double perspective of the Self and of the material. Finally he expands the poetic from the field of literature to all art practices.

The captive light of blurry and opalescent glazes led me through the Lacanian concept of the Gaze to posit two interiorities: that of the Self and that of the

object together with the material. Following Maritain's definition, the poetic can be seen the interrelation between those two interiorities.

Material

One aspect of the poetic is the tension between the dominance of the author and that of various factors questioning the very possibility of control. Earlier in this essay I raised the importance of the unconscious as one of those factors. But in addition to the unconscious, a regard for materials is also a significant dimension of the poetic and one that can be seen as inflicting another blow upon author-ity.

Depth can be perspectival but the dimension of depth, in a celadon glaze for example, is more akin to the very substance of the glaze and to the material than to perspective. This materiality is about the glaze rather than using the glaze to give the illusion of something else. It is the substance of the material that retains the eye rather than the way it is being used and directed towards the illusory. This regard for materials and substance connects with the definition Maritain gives of poetry in that it implies a concern for the inner of the glaze and its interiority.

The 'fish scale' effect I investigated and which consists of cracks developing at an angle to the body and superimposed on one another, conveying a striking impression of spatial depth, does have a perspectival dimension. However, it is not used to render what it is not: the cracks develop 'naturally' during the firing and are part of the very substance of the glaze. Perspectival,

yet substantial. It is useful to compare the fish scale effect in glaze with *The Emperor's terrapin*. This is carved from a single block of Central Asian jade and is characterized by the occurrence of fish scales in certain areas. Because fish scales occur in jade this casts fresh light on the ambivalence of the 'fish scale' phenomena for the glaze has eventually a strong link to the family of the celadons. Ru glaze, a celadon glaze with occasional fish scales occurrences shows a similar relation between celadons and the 'fish scale' phenomena where depth is a dimension of substance and not of perspective.

Poetry, too, shows a strong concern for materials. Some poets address words as I do my materials, marvelling at them and their sensuality: "Words, their sound and even their very appearance, are, of course, everything to the poet: the sense of words is the sense of poetry" (Read, 1932, p.45). Read says of Hopkins: "He had that acute and sharp sensuous awareness essential to all great poets" (Read, 1932, p.57). Read stresses further the importance of sensuality and materiality in poetry and draws a parallel with painting: "The difference between a poet and a painter is a difference of material, not of method. And that, it seems, is another way of saying with T.S. Eliot that "the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium" (Read, 1932. p.37).

My investigation of depth through the use of enclosed forms and blurry glazes are linked with a concern for interiority be it that of the subject or of the material. This concern with the inner of the material raises tricky issues within

a visual-art practice where form is also an issue. If material is a primary concern what then is the role of the form?

For Bachelard this presents no difficulty: “Meditated upon from the perspective of its depth, matter is the very principle that can dissociate itself from forms” (Bachelard, 1942, p. 2). But how can matter transcend form within a practice that involves the creation of form?

The concept of formlessness and formless art (art informel) first used by the French critic Michel Tapié in his 1952 book *Un Art Autre* to describe types of art, which had in common that they were based on highly improvisatory (i.e. informal) procedures would be an ideal way to push my work forward. But there is a difficulty in thinking and even more in making the formless as I feel caught in a dialectical process of making that would end up with a form no matter how natural, organic, mineral, unpremeditated or accidental it might appear. Eventually “To call for the formless does not mean to call for non-forms, but rather to engage in a work on forms equivalent to birth or a death throes: a tearing process destroying something and within that very negativity inventing something absolutely new” (Didi-Huberman, 1995, p.21).

This points out precisely to what the formless means for me: a recurring process of form creation.

Painting does not seem to have to deal with that issue of form. While a canvas is a form, its frontal position calls for an immediate immersion.

I would like my work to enjoy a similar position and yet remain three-dimensional: a form allowing immersion and disappearing as a form when doing so. But the volume needs to share with the glaze a concern for interiority.

Following earlier work on envelope forms I imagined 3D-canvases or sculptural paintings: volumes that would face the beholder. These could be placed directly on the wall or in a way they are both a volume and frontal such as set on a base, which is mounted to the wall?

Addressing my concern for interiority, the forms have a structure inside which supports them, a structure not visible to the viewer other than as indicated by the protuberances and by the slumping of the top slab during drying and firing. The form is an accident of the structure. So it too is about the inner space and as such it is about other concerns than the form; the form is only a consequence. The awareness for form disappears in the light of another concern – a concern for interiority.

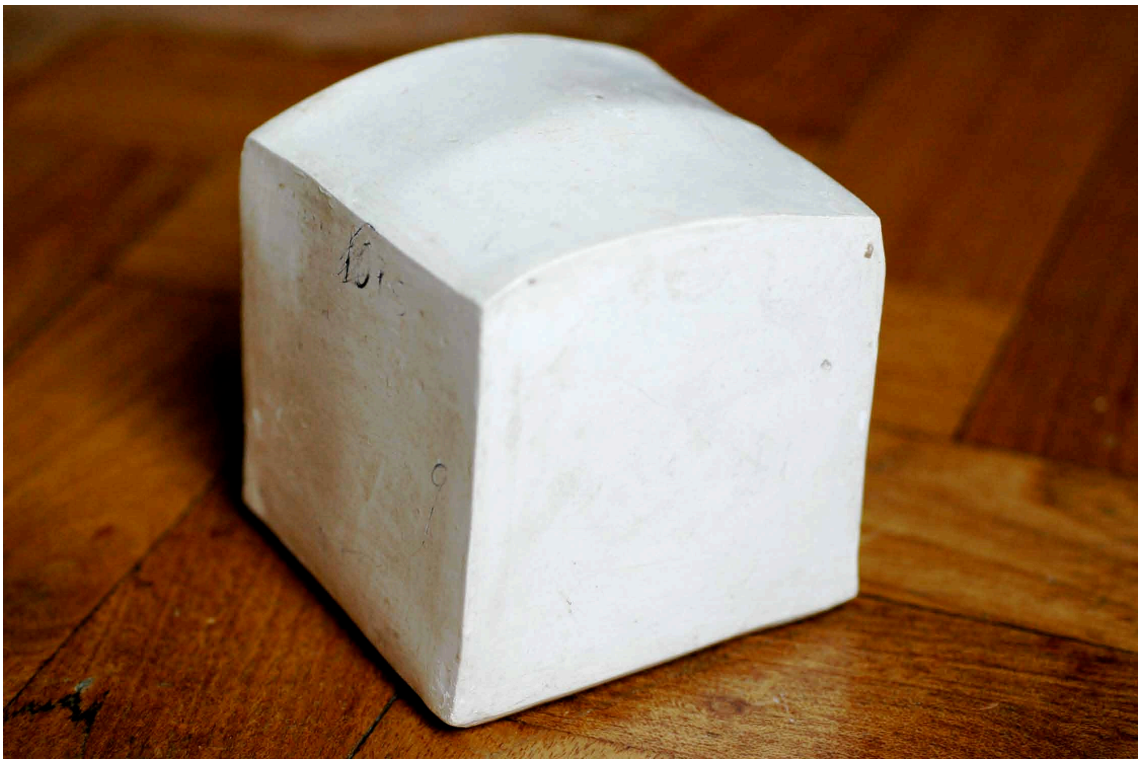
Enclosed form, biscuit porcelain, 2007

Enclosed form, biscuit porcelain, 2007

CLASSIFICATIONS OF GLAZE

Context

In the course of the research, I have developed a palette of glazes. Some of these I have refined from my former practice, some were given by tutors, technicians or colleague students at the RCA, some were found at the Kolding glaze library and eventually some have been developed through analysis or advice found in technical literature. The development involved adapting glazes to materials available and establishing firing schedules for the kilns I use at the RCA. These glazes have been developed as part of my research into poetic space and depth. To this end I limited the variables to test the different glazes on an identical form: multiples of a porcelain cobblestone, with a ridge on its top face, that were made by slipcasting.



Having first tested the glazes on tiles fired vertically to assess with regards to assess visual and physical qualities like viscosity, the glazes were then tested on the three-dimensional objects. After a first phase of tests in 2009 there were approximately 50 cobblestones. In the last year of studio practice at the RCA, I used the cobblestones to record a wider palette of glazes and materials to total over 200 pieces.

Objectives

In this chapter I various ways of classifying glazes. Singer writes “as it is not possible to assign structure to glazes their systematic classification presents difficulties and many methods may be adopted, all of an empirical nature” (Singer, 1960, p.6). The paper will review some of those methods of classifying glazes in the literature and when possible apply them to the glazes I use. According to the criteria used for classification, their relevance will provide insights into the relevant elements driving my interest for glazes.

Technical classifications

The most common classifications for glazes described in the literature focus on the technical or scientific make up of the glaze while some are based on firing temperature:

Temperature

Traditionally “the most convenient classification are those which are based on the temperature to which the pot has been fired and the degree of vitrification which has occurred in the body” (Cooper, 1978, p.3). Fraser identifies five main types:

- Raku glazes generally maturing below 900°C
- Majolica glazes maturing in the range of approximately 900-1050°C
- Earthenware types covering the range 1020-1160°C
- Stoneware glazes maturing between 1200-1300°C
- Porcelain types maturing in the range 1220-1450°C (Fraser, 1973, p.2).

Classification of cobblestones according to temperature (right is coldest)

High temperature (stoneware and porcelain) vs. low temperature glazes (earthenware)

Composition

Kerl divided glazes into three groups based on the major flux:

- Lead glazes formed essentially from lead oxide, perhaps a part of the silica replaced by boric oxide or by tin oxide, and a part of the lead oxide by alkalis or alkaline earths
- Earth glazes made from insoluble minerals
- Salt glaze, the result of the action of the fumes of common salt (Parmelee, 1973, p.5)

Chemical classification

A chemical classification was proposed by Parmelee (Parmelee, 1973, p.6-7) as follows:

A. Raw glazes

I. Containing lead

a. No alumina present

1. Lead the only base

2. With other bases

b. Containing alumina and various bases

1. High lead, 0.5 mol. equivalent or more

2. Low lead, less than 0.5 mol. equivalent

3. Containing boric oxide (not fritted)

4. No alkali present, containing boric oxide (not fritted)

II. Leadless, containing alumina, with various bases

a. Containing alkaline earths, but no alkalis

b. Containing alkalis and alkaline earths

1. Natural clay slips

2. Synthetic mixtures of minerals

c. Containing alkalis, alkaline earths, and zinc oxide

d. Containing boric oxide

e. Salt glazes

B. Fritted glazes

I. Containing lead in addition to other bases

a. Without alumina or boric oxide

b. With alumina and boric oxide

1. Without alkali

2. With alkali

II. Leadless

a. Without boric oxide

b. With boric oxide

1. Alkalis, the only bases present

2. Alkalis, alkaline earths, with or without zinc present

c. Containing important amounts of barium

Other characteristics

Parmelee further describes characteristics used to define individual glazes or groups of related compositions:

- Relative fusibility, e.g., "easily fusible," "difficultly fusible," and sometimes by cone maturing temperature or range

Relative fusibility

Relative fusibility

- The use or absence of some important glaze ingredient, e.g., "salt glaze," "raw lead glaze," "leadless glaze," "tin enamel," and so on
- The kind of wares upon which the glazes are used, e.g., whiteware glaze, porcelain glaze, majolica glaze, stoneware glaze, and others
- The place of origin, such as Albany slip glazes, Bristol glazes, Rockingham glaze; or the name of the inventor, as, for example, Seger porcelain glaze
- The method of preparation or application; that is, the glazes may be raw or fritted or applied by fuming (Parmelee, 1973, p.5)

Raw glazing vs. application over biscuit

The above classifications seem of little relevance to my research as they focus on issues of technique and/or science. Aesthetics, appearance of glazes or the effect on the form – central to this project - are not discussed.

Other classifications

Rather than adopt a technical or natural scientific approach in this research, it is necessary for the classification to address aesthetics, perception and meaning. I propose to replace the scientific/technical approach with a more subjective perspective that attempts to qualify effect and appearance.

Glaze effects

One type of classification, is to classify glazes according to the effect produced by the fired glaze such as: transparent, opaque, matt, semi-matt,

satin vellum, crackle (Fraser, 1973, p.2). As a chemist, Parmelee argues that “such interesting properties as colour and texture-gloss, mattness, opacity-in all degrees are not peculiar to any limited group of glazes and cannot be considered as adequate bases for classification” (Parmelee, 1973, p.5). In contrast for my project such an approach can provide a useful tool for classifying the glazes I am using in my work. In terms of perceptible qualities the following are of particular relevance: explorie the different grades of mattness (opaque, matt, semi-matt), crackle (simple cracks, fish scales), fluidity (drops, running, pooling), veils (hair or oil effect).

Classification according to mattness

Classification according to crazing and cracks

Ibid.

In this research I will focus on the issues of fluidity and viscosity and more specifically the phenomenon of dripping and drops will be central to my investigation.

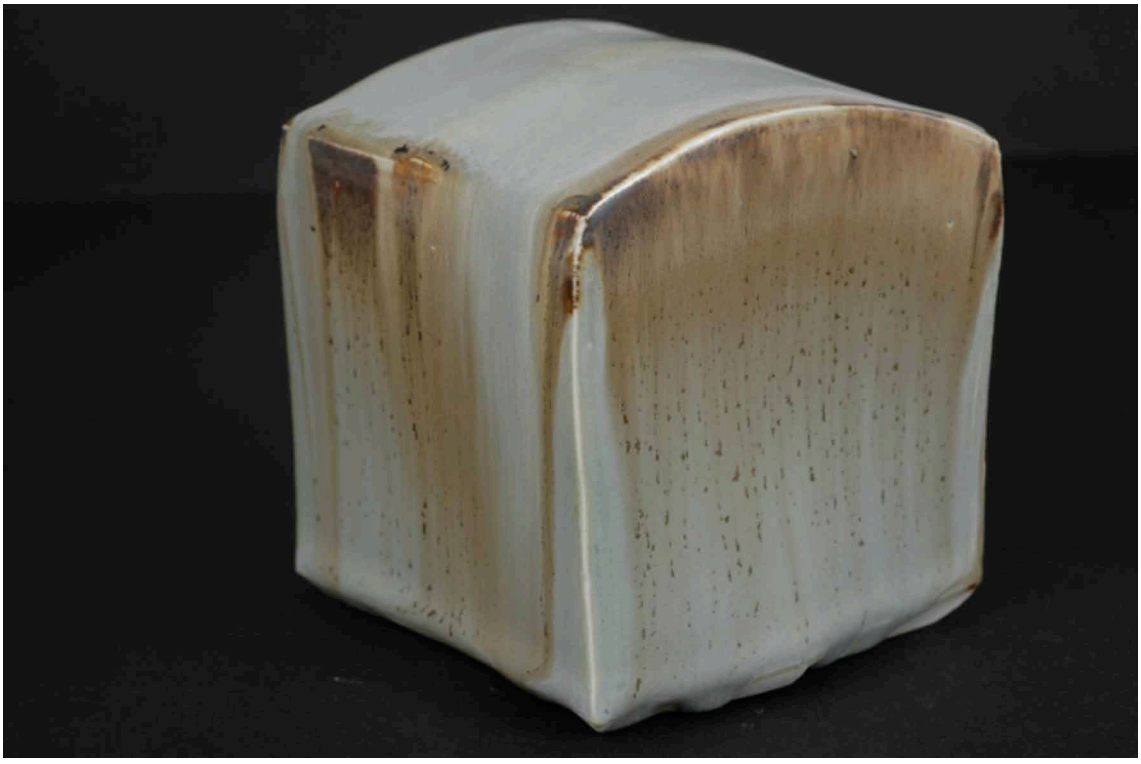
Fluidity and viscosity

> A glaze is the result of interaction between alkali and acid. When heated, these two are in active opposition and the excitement engendered gives rise to a fluid state, the molten glaze. […] The degree of fluidity involved is referred to in terms of viscosity when discussing glazes (Hamer, 1997, p.155-156).

The issue of viscosity is relevant when priority is placed on the greater stiffness of the glaze so that it does not move, or moves very little in the firing. Because I am also concerned with the liquid character of the glaze, I would propose going beyond normal technical practice to consider the glaze from both points of view: viscosity and its reciprocal: fluidity.

Drops

Classification according to dripping ability



Drops are a significant feature of the glazes I use indicating as they do the surface and edge of the form as well as asserting the presence of the glaze. The term ‘drop’ is of limited use to me to describe the phenomenon of a particular movement in a glaze.

> Unlike a crystalline compound, which has a definite melting point which is also the solidifying point, a glaze on the other hand, has a melting point at the upper hand of a melting range. It is not the same as its solidifying point which is at the end of a melting range. […] Thus a glaze is described as maturing rather than melting (Hamer, 1997, p.219 & 156)

Before reaching its liquid state and being capable of flowing and becoming a drop, the glaze looses its viscosity to become “first pliable and then a stiff liquid” (Hamer, 1997, p.220). Within the melting range, the glaze resembles a soft paste. Beyond the maturing temperature range the glaze becomes a very runny glass. Below there is no action involved beside setting the molten glaze even though “it does not usually set completely at the lower end of the range but tarries in a soft state until approximately 500°C” (Hamer, 1997, p.156). Hence, following the physics of glaze and the concept of a maturing range, it is appropriate to reproduce it descriptively and to speak not only of drops but also of accumulations, rolls of glaze, runny streams and pools from the lower temperature end of the range to the higher one. Drops are only one of the stages within a spectrum. In spite of the theory of the melting range, some

glazes produce more fluid melts than do others and thus drops can be very different in their nature: drops can be fluid (and difficult to halt) or pasty.

But drops are far from being only a testimony of the glazes' maturing range. Drops are a key feature of this research and they express and stem from central aesthetic and psychological concerns.

Drops are a step in the process of the form melting away and appearing to disappear. As such, drops are an expression of the priority of material concerns over form. Drops are the promise of formlessness and point out to the form as only being temporary. The drop is the result of an accident of material. In the case of glazes and their maturing range, the drop before becoming liquid is turning into something resembling a paste, an admixture (la pâte). Gaston Bachelard describes admixture as "the basis of a truly intimate materialism in which shape is supplanted, effaced, dissolved. It presents the problem of materialism in their elementary forms, since it relieves our intuition of any worry about shape. The problem of form is given a secondary role" (Bachelard, 1942, p.104). Bachelard describes further the implications of dreaming of admixture:

> If these flaccid dreams could be studied systematically, they would lead to a knowledge of mesomorphic imagination - that is, of an imagination intermediate between the formal and the material. The objects of mesomorphic dream take form only with great difficulty, and then they lose it; they collapse like soft clay (pâte). […] Those dreams […] are by

> turns struggle or defeat in the effort to create, form, deform or mould (Bachelard, 1944, p.106).

How better to express the formlessness implied by the contemplation of the drop of glaze?

But the drop is also a symbol of fusion and union.

Following Bachelard still, union and binding is one of the fundamentals of water's imagination:

> when we have succeeded in making water truly penetrate into the very substance [of the material] then the experience, the long dream of 'binding' begins. Sometimes the worker dreaming of his task attributes this ability to bind substantially through the sharing of intimate ties to the water. In fact, many people unconsciously love water for its viscosity (Bachelard, 1942, p.104).

Through this key concept of viscosity, glazes, are intrinsically bound to water's imagination. Viscosity is water and clay merged: the expression of union. In the case of glazes, viscosity is a physical characteristic of the glaze itself. But union in a glaze is also the merger of the glaze and of the body and it is possible to link the imaginary concept of union with another key characteristic of both technique and aesthetics of glazes: the body-glaze layer between glaze and body (also called intermediate layer or interface).

> The body-glaze layer is the part of a fired pot where the glaze meets the body. […] As the glaze becomes molten some of it will soak into the body […] This layer is more strongly defined in stoneware and porcelain […] A thick body-glaze layer develops in porcelain. Here it can be twice the thickness of the glaze remaining as pure glaze (Hamer, 1997, p.30).

This merging of body and glaze, this physical union, points out to a significant aspect of my use of high temperature glazes on porcelain: their ability to be more than just surface, ornament, illusion and gaining depth to become the very volume of sculpture, the material and the substance itself. By linking the intermediate layer with the imaginary concept of union, material science supports the dream and the material imagination, whilst raising the question of the extent to which the poetic rêverie needs the backing of science to exist. Can it not claim alone its own validity? Could it simply create a reality of its own? It is satisfying to see knowledge and science corroborate rêverie. It is not necessary and often too material imagination will be confounded by science. In one example the liquid-liquid immiscibility analysed by Kingery can be seen as a key-feature of some of the deepest celadon glazes (Kingery, 1985). The latter seems to emphasize the technique of layering at the expense of the importance of fusion.

In his series of books on material imagination, Bachelard started with a psychoanalysis of fire. His first objective was scientific: to sever objectivity

from individual and especially archetypal subjectivity. “To start with, everything must be called into question: sensation, common sense, usage however constant, even etymology, for words, which are made for singing and enchanting, rarely make contact with thought” (Bachelard, 1938, p.1). In the psychoanalysis of science undertaken by Bachelard, the first objective was to suppress errors whereas in art and poetic imagination, no healing is sought. Within the field of art, Bachelard’s use of psychoanalysis is aimed at creation not repression and psychoanalysis consists in understanding but only to better follow the developments of material imagination.

Further and particularly relevant to the significance of glazes maturing through flames, is the union of water and fire. Bachelard quotes several poets dealing with the combination of water and fire: “Water is a burned body” is the last sentence of Balzac’s ‘Garamba’. “Water is a dampened flame” writes Novalis and in the ‘Season in Hell’ Rimbaud is also linking the two elements in a striking expression: “I crave. I demand! A blow struck with a fork, a drop of fire” (Bachelard, 1942, p.97). For Bachelard all those poetic metaphors “of astonishing daring and scintillating beauty” stem from a more essential rêverie, whose sexual features are to be seen in learned myths and popular legends alike: the marriage of opposites. “When the imagination dreams of the durable union of water and fire, it forms a mixed material image of unusual power. It is the material image of warm humidity” (Bachelard, 1942, p.100). Here Bachelard points out to a psychological principle:

> Ambivalence is the surest basis for indefinite valorisations. The notion of warm humidity gives rise to an ambivalence of unbelievable power. It is no longer a question of an ambivalence that plays only upon superficial and changing qualities. It is really matter that is involved. Warm humidity is matter become ambivalent –almost, one could say, ambivalence materialized (Bachelard, 1942, p.100-101).

That ambivalence is at play on other levels: drops of glaze express the extreme fluidity of the material. Yet this fluidity is stopped and the drop is fluidity made solid, refused, reverted, and petrified. The drop of glaze is a former liquid petrified in the air and its possibility to burst while falling has been suppressed. The drop of glaze is ambiguous. It is in between two states. That ambiguity is for Bachelard a prerequisite to material imagination and he sets it as a primordial law of the imagination:

> A matter to which the imagination cannot give a dual existence cannot play the psychological role of fundamental matter. Matter that does not provide the opportunity for a psychological ambivalence cannot find a poetic double, which allows endless transpositions. For the material element to engage the whole soul, there must be a dual participation (Bachelard, 1942, p.12).

This ambivalence, this in-between-two-states-ness, endows the drop of glaze and with it the glaze itself with a transitional quality: on its way towards bursting, yet stopped. This transitional quality can be seen from a

psychoanalytical point of view and specifically through Winnicott's concept of transitional objects and transitional spaces. Winnicott assumes that:

> the task of reality-acceptance is never completed, that no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and that relief from this strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience which is not challenged (arts, religion, etc.). This intermediate area is in direct continuity with the play area of the small child who is 'lost' in play. […] Transitional objects or transitional phenomena belong to the realm of illusion […] This intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality, constitutes the greater part of the infant's experience, and throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts" (Winnicott, 1971, p.14).

For another psychoanalyst of the British Independent Group, Marion Milner, this intermediate area is fusion of self and object. Eventually it amounts to "finding the familiar in the unfamiliar, which incidentally, Wordsworth said is the whole of the poet's business" (Milner, 1987, p.87).

Could a glaze be such a transitional space or phenomena? How does a drop of glaze and the concepts of fusion and union relate to this transitional quality in the Winnicottian sense?

The glaze starts off as a mix of minerals in suspension in water. The ceramic piece is then sprayed or immerged in it. The body retains the water and the mix of minerals remains stuck on the surface. The piece is fired within a kiln. There, inside the kiln it reaches its maturing range where it merges with the body and possibly melts. When cooling down and eventually coming out of the kiln it is born as a new and separate object.

From the point of view of psychoanalysis, there is much to analyse: the spraying and immerging, the absorption and the sticking, the kiln, the firing, the emerging of the new object. But this discussion is confined to the drop and to the process of melting that led to it.

Marion Milner analysing a young boy burning and melting toys in a case she called ‘a game of war between two villages’ writes: “But there was much material in this analysis to do with burning, boiling down, and melting, which seemed to me to express the idea of the obliteration of boundaries [between self and object]” (Milner, 1952, p.96). There is a correlation with the idea of obliteration of boundaries at play in the glaze, especially when it reaches the far end of the melting range and starts dropping. This idea of melting and merging between self and object is central to this research. It is the idea

> that the basic identifications which make it possible to find new objects, to find the familiar in the unfamiliar, require an ability to tolerate a temporary loss of sense of self, a temporary giving up of the discriminating ego which stands apart and tries to see things

> objectively and rationally and without emotional colouring. It perhaps requires a state of mind, which has been described by Berenson as 'the aesthetic moment' (Milner, 1952, p.97).

Milner further cites Berenson:

> In visual art the aesthetic moment is that fleeting instant, so brief as to be almost timeless, when the spectator is at one with the work of art he is looking at, or with actuality of any kind that the spectator himself sees in terms of art, as form and colour. He ceases to be his ordinary self, and the picture or building, statue, landscape, or aesthetic actuality is no longer outside himself. The two become one entity; time and space are abolished and the spectator is possessed by one awareness. When he recovers workaday consciousness it is as if he had been initiated into illuminating, formative mysteries (Berenson, 1950 cited by Milner, 1952, p.97-98).

It is this experience of becoming one with the work which is one of my central artistic interests. The obliteration of boundaries sheds another light on how the form eventually disappears through a concern for merging. The latter supposes form is denied altogether as subject and object dissolve and become undifferentiated. But one of the questions not addressed by Milner is that of the direction of the incorporation: inward or outward? Rather Milner supposes the subject always incorporates the object. Can we now conceive of the subject being incorporated, engulfed in the object?

Glaze types

Fraser distinguishes the following glaze types: Crystalline glazes (microcrystalline or macrocrystalline glazes), aventurine glazes, rutile glazes, matt glazes, satin-vellum glazes, flow glazes, crackle glazes, volcanic or froth glazes, lustre glazes, localized reduction glazes, ash glazes… (Fraser, 1973, p.66). Parmelee sees such a classification of limited use as “we cannot divide glazes into groups defined by the presence or absence of crystallization since that phenomenon may be developed in almost all kinds of compositions, depending in part on the concentration of particular components and the heat treatments” (Parmelee, 1973, p.5).

For this project, however, a classification into glaze types that encompasses elements of aesthetics, perception, technique and art history can prove helpful.

Among the glazes I can distinguish several glaze types: flambés, celadons, copper reds, monochromes, glazes of the Carriès school…

Flammés, Copper reds, Celadons, Others

Flambés and Flammés

In English a flambé is an “iridescent red glaze produced by transmutation of colloidal copper into a relatively transparent glaze” (Hamer, 1997, p.134).

In French the Flambé is part of a larger type of glazes referred to as ‘Flammés’.

In France ceramic artists started trying to reproduce the effects of Chinese Flambés towards the end of the 1840s triggering a dynamic that would survive four decades in the wake of a general admiration for Oriental arts. Initially, flammés were “ceramics fired under direct flame contact and on which fire has produced a variety of tones and effects. In technical language the metal oxides have undergone transmutations” (Albis, 1976).

The spectacular nature of flambés glazes caught the attention of early travellers to China. The Jesuit father François Xavier d'Entrecolles, "spy" and missionary in China at the beginning of the XVIIIth century wrote in a letter from the ceramic centre Kin-Te-Ching (Jingdezhen) dated January 25, 1722

> They have brought me one piece of porcelain called Yao-pien or transmutation. This transmutation takes place in the furnace, and is caused either by excess or lack of heat, or by some other obscure causes which are not easily guessed at. This piece, though the workmen tell me it is the result of mere chance, and is a failure in manufacture, is not less beautiful nor less highly prized. It was the intention to make vases in soufflé red, and a hundred pieces were entirely spoiled; the piece that I am speaking of came out of the oven like a piece of agate. By incurring the necessary risk and expense of various experiments, it might be possible to discover the art of making with certainty what has once been the result of chance (Entrecolles, 1722).

Edmond de Goncourt writes in a more literary response:

> The Chinese are very fond of those ceramics called yao-pien (transmutations), turning porcelain into what seems a precious material: those metamorphoses are the result of chance combinations of fire, flames, oxygen flow turning copper red into purple, blue, green

into shimmering and fluttering colours and all the more valued by the collectors of the Empire of the Middle as they resemble the tongues of fire that leaked the vase during its firing (Goncourt, 1881).

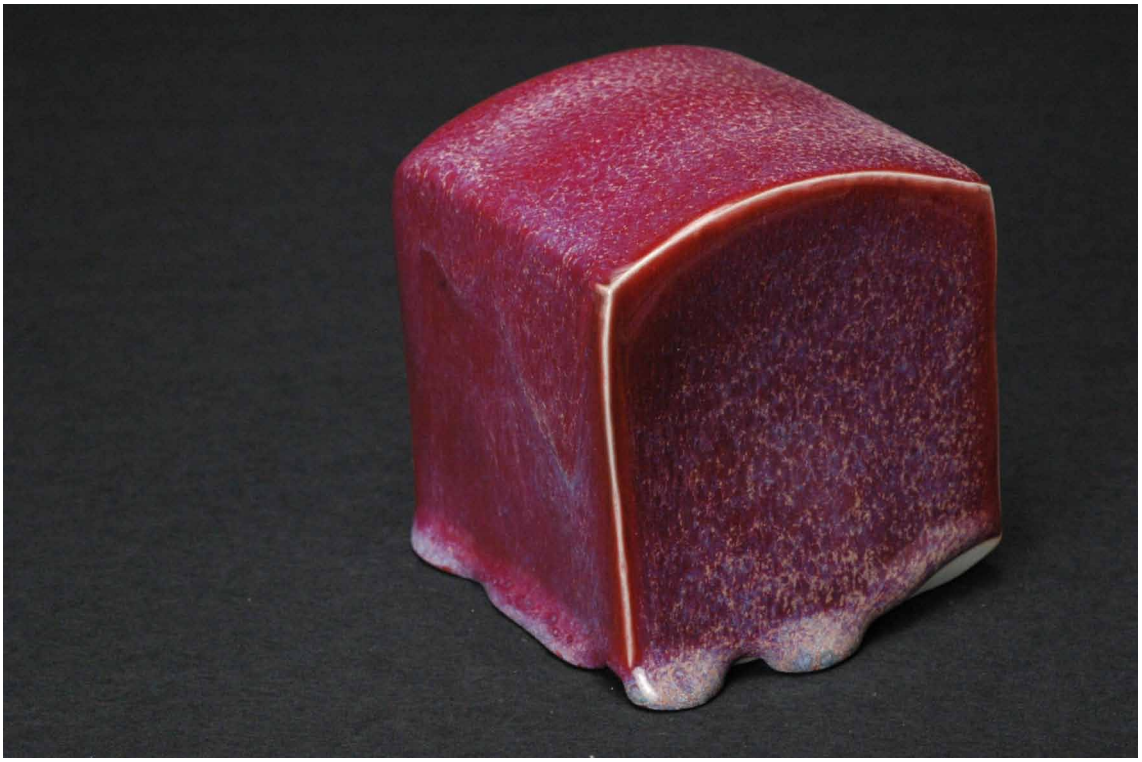
To summarize (Poulet, 2008):

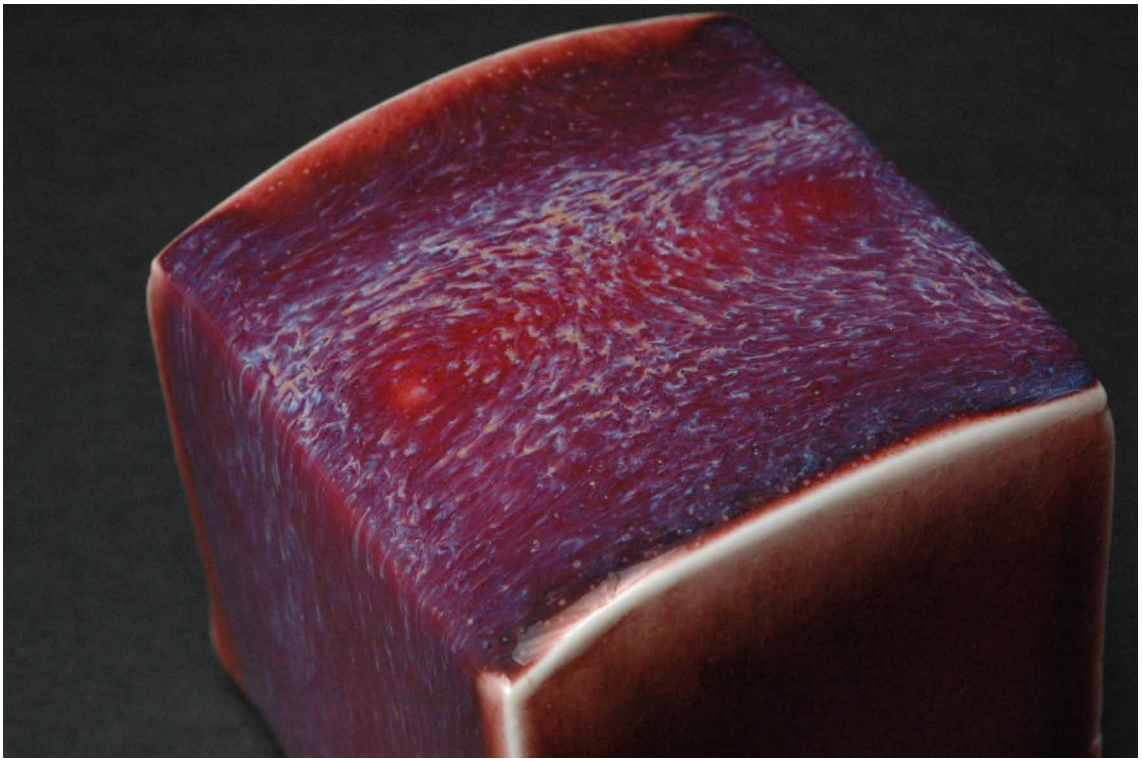
- The flambé effect is due to that of the glaze and its internal changes like the 'flame of punch (Jacquemart, 1883)
- Firing conditions, temperature and atmosphere – oxidising or reduction - play a key role in the coming to life of those transmutations.
- The big question of flambé comes – and very anciently so - from China and its copper red.
- The role of accidents and chance – or of the uncontrolled - led to praise the quality of pieces in spite of their lack of colour uniformity being a technical failure

But the flammé effect does not only involve copper reds.

In the XIXth century, the ceramists Chaplet and Dalpayrat used the term to describe glazes other than copper reds and it now encompasses a variety of effects not only involving excessive smelting and transmutations of a single glaze. Drops, superposition, underglazes and engobes are other ways to obtain a similar rendering. In the 1920s and 1930s the word was so widely used it became a celebration of the triumph of drips and runs (Poulet, 2008, p.26).

In the glazes I use the flammé effect can be applied to describe a variety of glazes.





The French writer Edmond de Goncourt compares the flambés to the “palette of a painter shown under a piece of glass” (Goncourt, 1881), drawing attention to a significant aspect of this type of glaze: they seem partly akin to the techniques of painting. Those glazes provide a sense of surface rather than a sense of volume. Donald Judd analysis of painting involves both surface and depth:

> Anything on a surface has space behind it. Two colours on the same surface almost always lie on different depths. An even colour, especially in oil paint, covering all or much of a painting is almost always both flat and infinitely spatial. The space is shallow in all of the work in which the rectangular plane is stressed. Rothko's space is shallow and the soft rectangles are parallel to the plane, but the space is almost traditionally illusionistic. In Reinhardt's paintings, just back from the plane of the canvas, there is a flat plane and this seems in turn indefinitely deep. […] anything spaced in a rectangle and on a plane suggests something in and on something else, something in its surround, which suggests an object or figure in its space, in which these are clearer instances of a similar world -that's the main purpose of painting (Judd, 2005, p.182).

In the flambé effect, streaks of different colours and tones or areas of different mattness could account for the impression of depth on the surface as one always appears nearer to the viewer than the others.

In Flambés depth is achieved in part through painterly techniques. Yet my research extending illusionistic depth (painterly, resting upon surface) to poetic depth (imaginary, absorbed into volume) may deny flambés glazes of a poetic dimension. This would deprive painting of any poetic potential. Several aspects are at work and the presence of illusionistic components need not rule out the poetic. Earlier I identified significant characteristics of flambés glazes - drops, runs and streaks as well as the accidental - whose poetic dimension I have discussed.

Monochromes

Monochrome glazes and other glazes

An important characteristic of most of the glazes I am researching is that all are essentially monochromatic. By definition monochrome is imageless and has “neither perspective, nor figure-ground relationships, nor other cues necessary to creating the optical illusion of depth. In its renunciation of illusionistic devices, it answers the call for a concrete, literal art that has the material presence of other real objects in the world” (Rose, 2006, p.21). Donald Judd sees the monochrome as enjoying a specific position within painting: it avoids illusionistic means. Judd acknowledges this specificity as he excludes “complete and unvaried fields of colour or marks” from sharing traditional illusionistic concerns with the rest of painting. This is exemplified in Yves Klein’s blue paintings, which he considers as belonging to paintings that are “unspatial” (Judd, 2005, p.25).

In spite of this literality and materiality the monochrome simultaneously opens onto an infinite perceptual depth and may be considered an experience of the metaphysical, the spiritual, and the immaterial. “Thus the monochrome has two sources: mystical and concrete and its development in the twentieth century illustrates the division between the spiritual search for a transcendental experience and the wish to emphasize the material presence of the object as a concrete reality and not an illusion” (Rose, 2006, p.21).

Monochromes seem a paradox, an ambivalence that is the result of the links between materiality and interiority.

Earlier I discussed how Bachelard claims, “that every poetics must accept components of material essence” (Bachelard, 1942, p.3) and how he conceptualizes meditation over matter as a way to cultivate an open imagination, thus stressing out the links between materiality and interiority. Through poetry as the main example, Bachelard demonstrated how the three terms are essentially linked. While the Bachelardian concept of material imagination can demonstrate how poetry, materiality and interiority are linked, there are other ways of investigation.

In his book ‘The material-emotion’, the French poet and theoretician Michel Collot uses an aphorism of the poet René Char as a starting point for a reflection on contemporary poetry: “Dare become yourself the accomplished form of the poem. The joy of a glimpse of the matter-emotion sparkling, and instantly Queen” (Char, 1936, p.2). Following René Char and Michel Collot, poetry brings material and emotion together. The poem is material-emotion, though both seem opposite terms. Emotion deals with the inner world of

imagination and feelings, the world of subjectivity. Material on the other hand is the outer world of objectivity, of knowledge. Through poetry, the self and the world, experience and expression tend to merge. Emotion is an encounter between the self and the world, inner and outer.

While, for Bachelard, the ambivalence of the material imagination induces poetic rêverie, Collot adopts a linguistic approach: contrarily to conceptual, transcendental and arbitrary signification, the poetic signified maintains a necessary and immanent relation to the signifier. Merleau-Ponty saw this is an "emotional meaning" an act where content and form of expression are inseparable (Collot, 1997, p.27). The founding relation between the perceived (or signified) and the object/trigger of that perception (or signifier) seems to be a common trait between an emotional experience and an aesthetic or a poetic experience (Collot, 1997, p.15). Further still, aesthetic and emotion are often linked. Yves Klein wrote: "I would say that the poetry of painting has to do with feeling. It should be a kind of revelation, even a reverent experience. You come away feeling delight. […] Poetry does it, music does it, and painting does it. I think that's what art is, if it can convey that feeling" (Klein, 1983, pp.123-124).

My research with monochrome glazes has investigated the possible bringing together of the material-emotion, the perception of the cobblestones inducing an aesthetic and emotional response in the viewer. As meaning and content are neither literal nor arbitrary, that relation is necessarily immanent. Signified

and signifier are merged and this is a key dimension of the poetic and emotional character of the work.

The Celadon glazes classify under monochrome glazes.

> […]
> Et dès lors, je me suis baigné dans le Poème
> De la Mer, infusé d'astres, et lactescent,
> Dévorant les azurs verts; où flottaison blême
> Et ravie, un noyé pensif parfois descend;
>
> Où teignant tout à coup les bleuités, délires
> Et rythmes lents sous les rutilements du jour,
> Plus fortes que l'alcool, plus vastes que nos lyres,
> Fermentent les rousseurs amères de l'amour!
>
> And from then on I bathed in the Poem
> Of the sea, infused with stars and latescent,
> Devouring the green azures; where, flotsam pale
> And ravished, a pensive drowned person sometimes sinks;
>
> Where, suddenly dyeing the blueness, delirium
> And slow rhythms under the gleams of daylight,
> Stronger than alcohol, vaster than our lyres,
> The bitter redness of love ferments!
>
> Le Bateau Ivre, Arthur Rimbaud (Rimbaud, 1871)

Hamer defines celadon:

> a grey-green to grey-blue stoneware and porcelain glaze. The colour is derived from a very small amount of red iron oxide which in the

reducing firing has been changed to black iron oxide. Celadon ware originated in China, developing from dark, grey-green thickly glazed Yue ware to its artistic maturity in the Song dynasty. […] The classic celadon glaze is thickly applied and semi-translucent. The glaze is very viscous when molten in the firing and prone to crawling. […] A more transparent pale bluish glaze fired on porcelain, like the Chinese Yingqing, is also included as a celadon (Hamer, 1997, p.50).

Monet's Water Lilies

Claude Monet's endeavours to convey an illusion of depth in the Water Lilies (Nymphéas) series of paintings suggest useful parallels with both the flambé and the monochrome glazes I use. In the Water Lilies is depth achieved through traditional painterly illusionistic means or is it the result of yet another dimension? Monet discards traditional painting techniques through the elimination of light-dark contrasts and the outlines of shapes against the background that create the illusion of deep space in academic art. Despite those innovations, and following Judd's remark quoted earlier he remains almost traditionally illusionistic. Commenting on Monet's work, Debrus writes: "this depth and space is a very complex one where several plans merge, juxtapose or even collide. The material (the paste, the touch) and the colour (its tone, its saturation, its value) come together merging or contrasting to create plastic spaces that loose the gaze into a vertigo" (Debrus, 2006, p.4). But whereas Debrus's description of Monet's space remains plastic and spatial, Clemenceau in another account of the Nymphéas suggests a new dimension of depth and space:

> To see wasn't it to understand? And to see only learn to gaze. Gaze outside, inside, gaze everywhere to extol the sensations of man through all tremors of the universe. Water was drinking the light and transposing it, sublimating it to the deepest before returning to visual senses surprised of unknown reactions. Here lays properly spoken the miracle of the Water Lilies that represent the order of things differently than how we had hitherto looked at it. New relations, new lights.

> Always changing appearances of a self-denying universe and yet finding its expression in our sensations. To accept hitherto unknown emotions isn't it getting from the mute infinite new states of assimilation? Isn't it getting deeper into the world itself into the impenetrable world? Here is what Monet discovered in looking at the sky in the water of his garden. And here is what he pretends teaching us (Clemenceau, 1928).

Clemenceau refers to a further dimension of depth: one that is not visual as it cannot be seen with the eyes only, one that is both external and internal, one that has to do with emotions and the unknown.

The example of Monet and his Water Lilies series offers a way of understanding what depth in monochrome might be. It is generally understood that monochrome has its origins in the close-valued, radiant late works of Monet (Rose, 2006). Monet is seen as having set up some of the essentials of contemporary monochrome art:

> The absence of a horizon line in Monet's late Nymphéas, as well as their horizontal extension beyond the field of vision, produces the effect of visually immersing the spectator in the lily pond that fills the visual field. The elimination of the horizon line and the occupation of the total field of vision are the beginning of the progressive eclipse of the distance between subject and object that characterizes large-scale post-Cubist abstraction such as the paintings of Newman and Rothko (Rose, 2006, p.23).

But scale is only one tool and a key concept of monochrome art is the possibility of immersion and the abolition of distance between subject and object. The possibility of immersion supposes a space and a depth within regardless of how unspatial the work itself may be. Is this an intuition of an inner world? It is like starring at the sun, closing your eyes and being blinded by its own reflection opening up into an infinite. Another way to immerse and abolish distance is by having the possibility of close contact with even a small object. Holding a cobblestone to stare at it leads precisely to this experience of immersion. Immersion can occur through passive overwhelming or active penetration, plunging into.

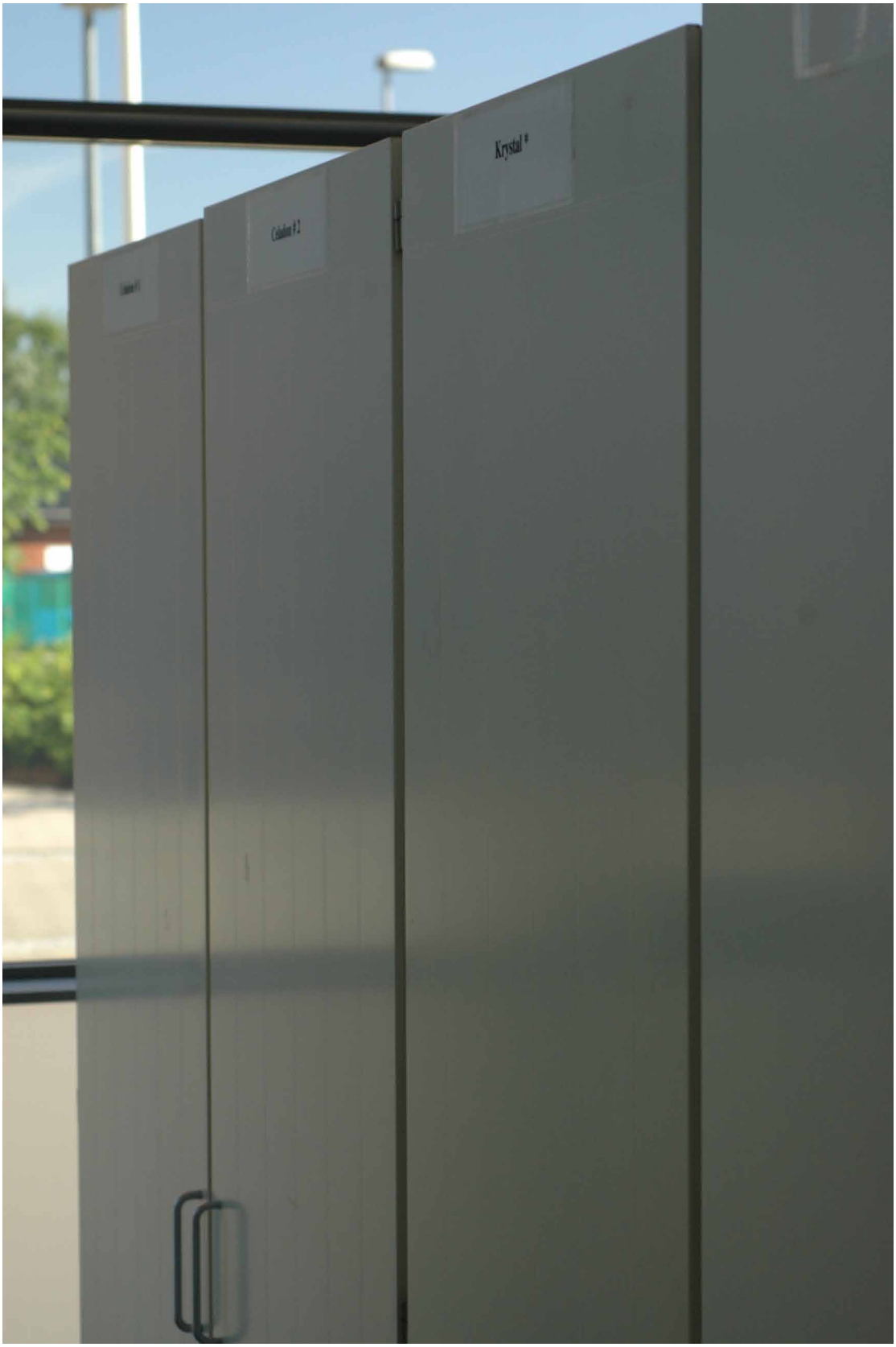
Monet provides a useful parallel with the flambé and the monochrome glazes. In the flambé effect, as in the Water Lilies depth perception is partly visual, perspectival, and illusionistic but this plan is not the only one at work and there is yet another dimension operating: one where perception is not only retinal but has to do with interiority and feelings. Importantly the two plans add up and strengthen the perception of depth.

In the monochromes, the study of the Water Lilies stressed the importance of immersion as a way to open up an interior space that is not perspectival.

Kolding classification

The Kolding Design School in Denmark taught both a graduate and a post-graduate programme in ceramics between 1968 and 2007. Lisbeth Voigt

Durand (born 1946) joined the ceramic department in 1972 and stayed thirty five years until its closure in the summer of 2007, developing a very systematic approach to glaze testing. Throughout their study students were asked to contribute to the department's glaze library by carrying out a minimum of a 100 glaze tests that would complete the existing data base. The library now fills up over thirty five large drawers with each up to thirty shelves.


Krystal

The library's system of glaze classification reflects the different research projects, which focus on the importance of materials used. Traditionally chemical analysis and Seger formulation have neglected the specificities and variations of individual materials. Kolding's nomenclature adopts a different approach in that it uses Seger formulation, but with direct reference to the particular materials used.

KB09/5 is a name for a glaze

- K is for Kalifeldspat (potassium feldspar)
- B is for Barium Carbonate
- 09 refers to the amount of alkali (0,9) brought in by barium carbonate in the Seger formulation of the glaze (where the total of alkalis is always equal to 1). The rest of the alkalis (here 0.1) are brought in by the other element in the name of the glaze (here potassium feldspar).
- 5 is the quantity of silica in the Seger formulation of the glaze and a tenth fold of the quantity of alumina

0,070 K_2O	0,5 Al_2O_3	5 SiO_2
0,026 Na_2O	- Fe_2O_3	
0,004 CaO		
0,900 BaO		

The material focus in Kolding's classification is reinforced by the testing methods as those often are geared towards a comparison between the role/effects played by the different materials as shown in the series of glazes below:

FFD 07/3 (FF: potassium sodium feldpsar, D: dolomite)

NSD 07/3

PD 07/3 (P: petalite)

KT 07/3 (T: Talc)

NST 07/3

Kolding's nomenclature stresses the importance of materials used in a glaze. The resulting classification in 35 drawers is eclectic however and whereas materials used often provide a base for a classification (potassium feldspar, sodium feldspar, potassium sodium feldspar, nepheline syenite, petalite, lithium carbonate…) it is not the only criteria used. Glaze types (oil spot, temmoku, celadon…), colouring oxides used (nickel, copper, iron…) or tests protocols (tri-axial blends) also lead to the classification of the Kolding glazes.

GLAZES AT PLAY

During the Summer term of 2009, following the piece of the Cobblestones, its analysis in the chapter 'Classifications of Glaze' and the discussions/tutorials that it triggered, I aimed to address in a subsequent body of ceramic work the relation between the form and the glaze.

From the previous pieces, I had concluded my interest in glaze lies in its alluding to an interiority, both interiority of the glaze and of the form itself. Through the contemplative process and rêverie I thought that those pieces were made to provoke, the perception of the form became secondary. The eye and the beholder were drawn towards an inner at the core of which, the concern for the form and the 'Gestalt' eventually disappear. Similarly, the repetition of a single cobblestone provoked the disappearance of the form through its ubiquity. Both the piece and the form's sole intent were to serve, ultimately, the disappearance of the form. There is an obvious paradox in this, as the form never completely disappears and even pure glaze would still remain a form. This concern for an inner over the form is at best an endeavour to reverse the traditional priority of form and surface. How far can this be pushed further? While there is always a form of sorts, could this imply form is of no consequence and so form can be anything?

Anything?

In the chapter ‘Classifications of Glaze’ I have identified some characteristics of glaze I believed to be significant for my practice. One was the drop.

My question then became: Can the form be anything provided it is an appropriate support on which the glaze can develop its characteristics? Can the form eventually coincide with the drop? Think, become, be the drop itself?

To address these issues I developed a body of work around the idea of providing playgrounds for the glaze. But instead of planning those playgrounds I set out to find them in a process encompassing an element of randomness akin to Breton’s ‘trouvaille’ of found objects. I found four objects around the studio and the home: a measuring jug, a bunch of bananas, an iron and a pancake pan. The process of making the objects reproduced an earlier interest for interiority and underlying, hidden architectures. The four found objects were covered with a slab of clay and shaped around the object. A mould was then made and multiples eventually slip-cast in porcelain. The multiples were glazed with runny and fluid glazes. Eventually, on the occasion of the work in progress show at the RCA in November 2009, sixteen objects were displayed on a tilted shelf alongside three enclosed forms from an earlier series in a group-piece entitled *Edge*. Between September 2010 and March 2011, the piece was displayed again at Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Palais du Louvre in Paris on the occasion of the show La Scène Française, curated by Frédéric Bodet.

In this chapter I am first and foremost analysing the piece *Edge* through the lens of Winnicott's theory of play. Bourriaud's aesthetics of precariousness provides an embedding within contemporary art practices. The possible poetic elements of play are seen through the Surrealist ludic, the phenomenon of laughter, Kristeva's theory of revolution in poetic language and Derrida's concept of undecidability. Eventually the concept of 'jouissance' as used by Kristeva points out to another possible poetic dimension of the piece leading to an understanding of glaze as a poetic space of love and desire in both their merging and differentiating dimensions.

When developing classifications of glaze, I identified various visual characteristics of glaze at play in my work. One is the way glaze can melt and run down the surface to form a drip. Using Milner's approach to aesthetic experience, further analysis of this evidence of the melting processes and low glaze viscosity indicated an artistic and psychological concern for the dissolution of boundaries and becoming one with the work through a process of poetic contemplation and merging. This gave rise to the hypothesis that, through the ambivalence of solid liquidity exemplified in running processes and drips, the glaze could be akin to a transitional space as theorised by Winnicott, an "intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality" (Winnicott, 1971, p.14).

The notion of transitional space is one of the many elements of a wider array of developments grouped by Winnicott under the theme of transitional phenomena and ranging from "the early use of a transitional object or

technique to the ultimate stages of a human being's capacity for cultural experience" (ibid., p.40). In this continuum described by Winnicott, "there is a direct development from transitional phenomena to playing, and from playing to shared playing, and from this to cultural experiences" (Winnicott, 1971, p.51). Following this perspective, I will try to embed my artistic experience with glazed ceramic objects within this development scale, thus endowing the work with a dimension reflecting a chronology and a possible evolution.

In Marion Milner's view, the aesthetic experience, seen as play involving the re-enactment of fusion and merging of the boundary, seems more static or encompassing. Those elements, separated in time by Winnicott, occur simultaneously in Milner's description of artistic practice. A significant difference is that Milner's focus and case studies relate to older children rather than to the very young child and baby, which were Winnicott's prime objects of investigation. For Milner, it is less a scale than an homogeneous event in time, exemplified in her use of Berenson's concept of the 'aesthetic moment'. The theory of play, developed by Winnicott, and its dimension of temporal evolution provide insights into my research.

Paraphrasing and traducing Winnicott's theory of play, published in his seminal book 'Playing and Reality' (Winnicott, 1971, p.47-48), I propose the following statement. [Additions or changes to the original text are In *italic* and Winnicott's suppressed statement is between brackets [ ]].

I equate the artist with the baby and the mother with the kiln. Freud already paralleled child's play and artist's work (Freud, 1908) and the kiln is

transformational (turning the solid glaze into liquid and eventually solid) just as the infant's relation to the mother can be seen as transformational, the mother turning sensation into meaning.

A theory of play with ceramic glazes (after Winnicott)

It is possible to describe a sequence of relationships related to the developmental process and to look and see where playing belongs.

A. *Artist/beholder* [Baby] and *the glazed* object are merged in with one another. *Drips express symbolically this fusion and enclosed forms allude to their interiority echoing that of the viewer. Artist's/beholder's* [Baby's] view of the *glazed* object is subjective and *the glaze/kiln* [the mother] is oriented towards the making actual of what the *artist/beholder* [baby] is ready to find.

B. The *glazed* object is repudiated, re-accepted and perceived objectively. This complex process is highly dependent on there being a *kiln/glaze* [mother or mother-figure] prepared to participate and to give back what is handed out. This means that the *kiln/glaze* [mother] (or part of *kiln/glaze* [mother]) is in a 'to and fro' between being that which the *artist* [baby] has a capacity to find and (alternatively) being *itself* [herself] waiting to be found. If the *kiln/glaze* [mother] can play this part over a length of time without admitting impediment (so to speak) then the *artist* [baby] has some experience of magical control, that is, experience of that which is called 'omnipotence' in the description of intrapsychic processes (Winnicott, 1962). In the state of confidence that grows

up when the *kiln/glaze* [mother] can do this difficult thing well (not if *it* [she] is unable to do it), the *artist* [baby] begins to enjoy experiences based on a 'marriage' of the omnipotence of intrapsychic processes with the *artist's* [baby's] control of the actual. Confidence in the *kiln/glaze* [mother] makes an intermediate playground here, where the idea of magic originates, since the *artist* [baby] does to some extent experience omnipotence. All this bears closely on Erikson's work on identity formation (Erikson, 1956). I call this a playground because play starts here. The playground is a potential space between the *kiln/glaze* [mother] and the *artist* [baby] or joining *glaze/kiln* [mother] and *artist* [baby]. Play is immensely exciting. It is exciting not primarily because the instincts are involved, be it understood! The thing about playing is always the precariousness of the interplay of personal psychic reality and the experience of control of actual objects. This is the precariousness of magic itself, magic that arises in intimacy, in a relationship that is being found to be reliable. To be reliable the relationship is necessarily motivated by the *glaze's* [mother's] love, or its love-hate, or its object-relating, not by reaction-formations.

C. The next stage is being alone in the presence of someone. The *artist* [baby] is now playing on the basis of the assumption that the *glaze/kiln who is loved* [the person who loves] and who is therefore reliable is available and continues to be available when remembered after being forgotten. This *glaze/kiln* [person] is felt to reflect back what happens in the playing.

D. The *artist* [baby] is now getting ready for the next stage, which is to allow and to enjoy an overlap of two play areas. First, surely, the *kiln/glaze* [mother] fits in with the *artist's* [mother's] play activities. Sooner or later, however, *it* [she] introduces *its* [her] own playing, and *it* [she] finds that *artists* [babies] vary according to their capacity to like or dislike the introduction of ideas that are not their own. Thus the way is paved for a playing together in a relationship.

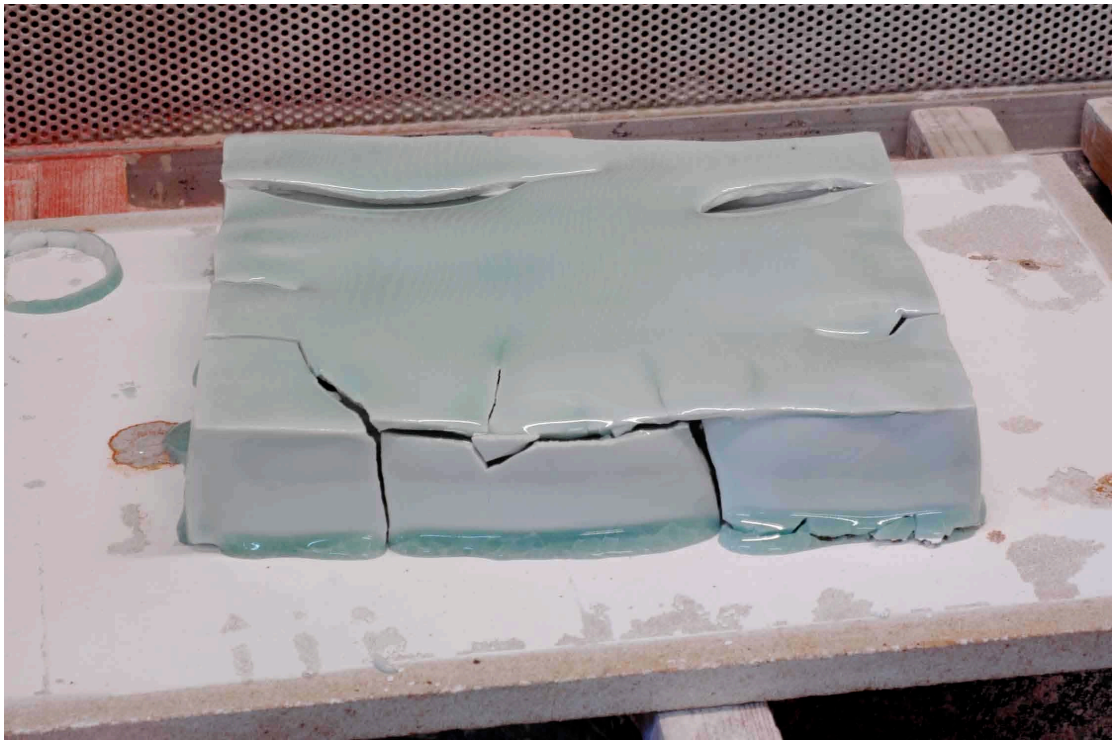
Following this modified theory of play after Winnicott and his assumption that there is a direct development from transitional phenomena to play, I will discuss the piece *Edge*.

The piece as it was displayed at the Work in Progress Show at the RCA in December 2009 consists of sixteen of the cast domestic objects and of three enclosed forms. This piece exemplifies the developments pointed out by Winnicott and can be seen to address precisely the issue of play.

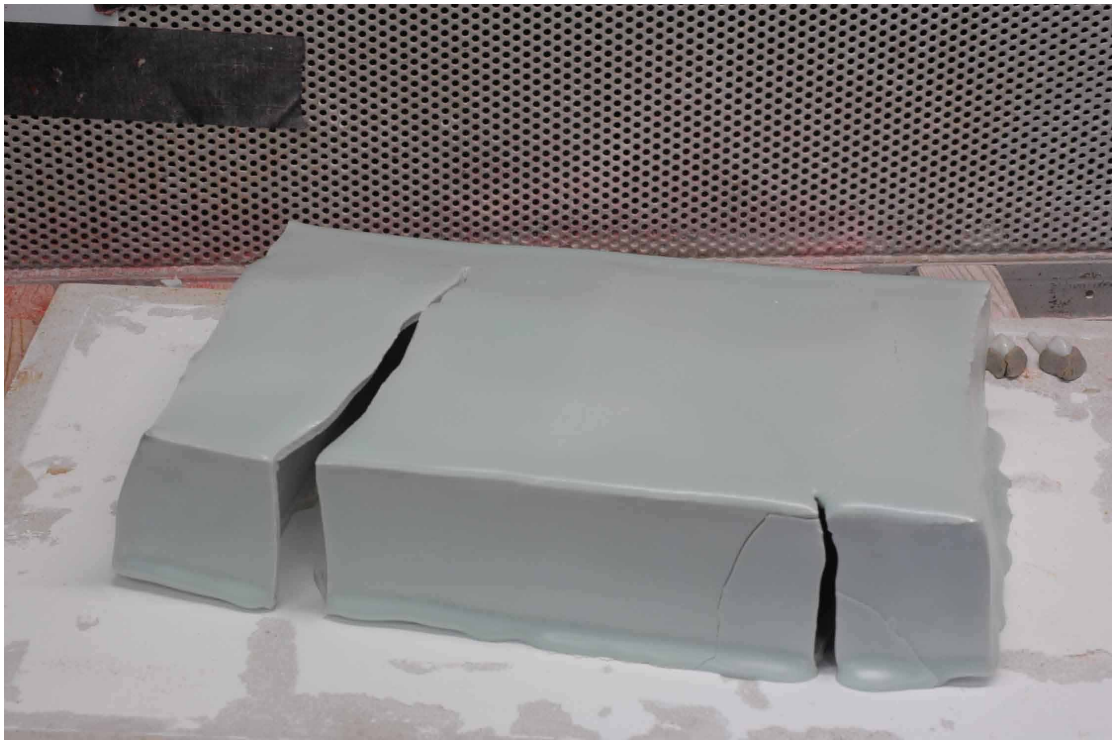
Edge (2009)

Edge followed several series of enclosed forms, through which I acquired a know how in making enclosed pieces covered with low-viscosity glazes. The learning process was long, costly in kiln shelves (as runny glazes often stuck the piece to the shelf), and frustrating. My practice was oriented towards making actual what I was ready to find: 'happy' accidents with glaze and preferably not unwanted ones. I then selected and discarded pieces subjectively.

Following are images of discarded pieces and (until now) equally discarded pictures.

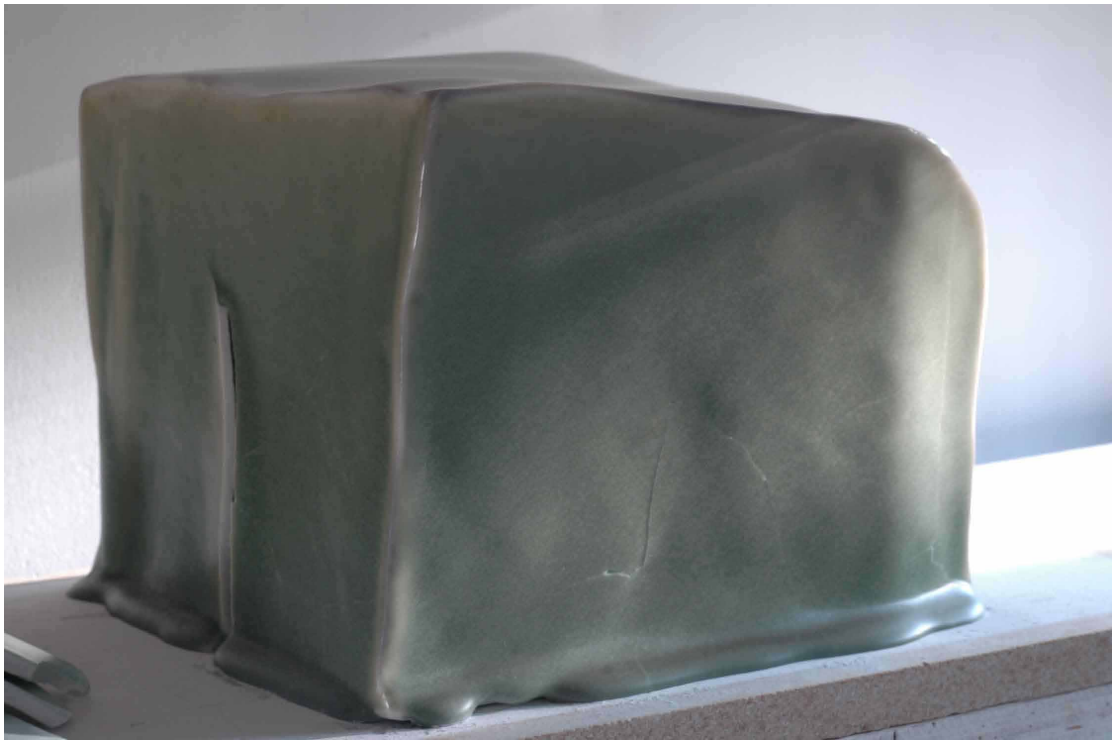


Enclosed form - 34x25x10 (cm) - December 2007



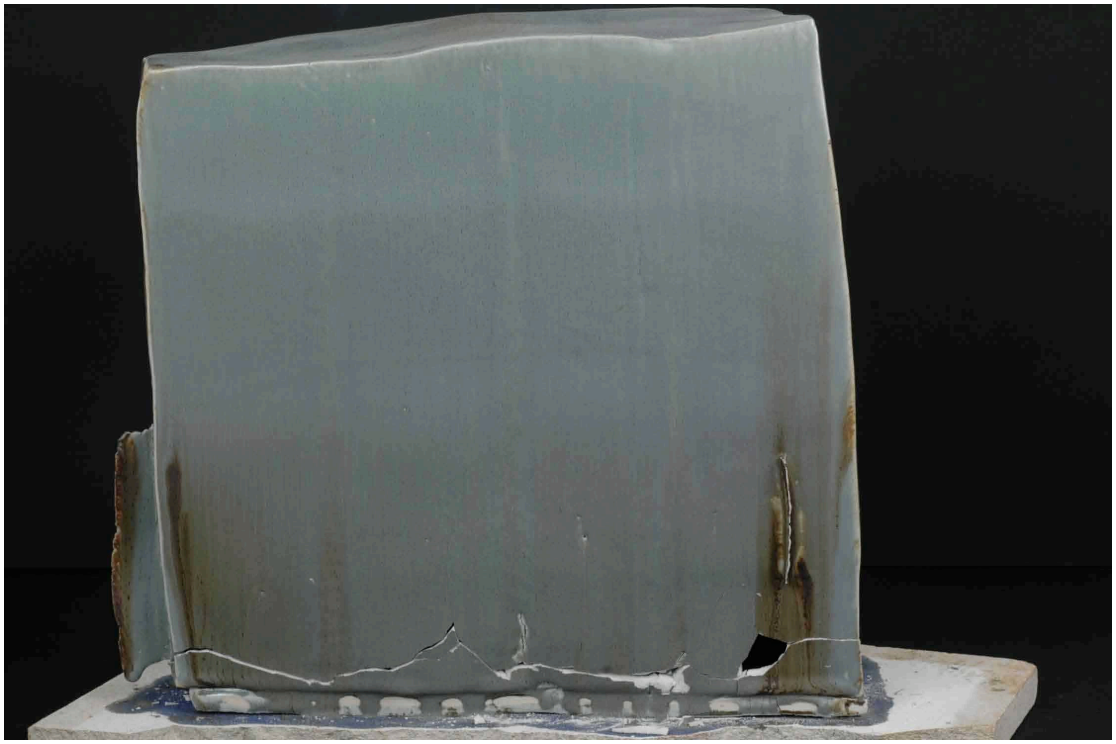
Enclosed form - 37x26x12 - December 2007

Enclosed form - 29x23x26 - December 2007



Enclosed form - 29x23x24 - December 2007

Enclosed form - 29x23x24 - December 2007



Enclosed form - 39x33x12 - May 2008

Enclosed form - 34x22x16 - April 2008

Successful pieces –the pieces are viewed again subjectively– are those I considered graceful in form and surface, representing a symbolic fusion and the merger of boundaries, inviting the beholder to an experience of losing him/herself within them.

Enclosed form - 30x25x25 - May 2008

Enclosed form - 37x27x10 - May 2008

Enclosed form – 8x8x10 - May 2008

Cobblestones – each 10x10x10 - March 2009

The aim of the cobblestones was to provide a catalogue of glazes and to allow for their classification along various sets of criteria. It connotes a systematic exploration and ordering of experience. The numbering and the arrangement of the cobblestones along a grid structure convey impressions of order and efficiency, voluntary control and will. In terms of craft and technique, the making of the cobblestones resulted in a better control and understanding of the way the glazes worked and of the most effective way to pack and to fire the kiln: a feeling not far from that of intimacy. The process involved a renewed awareness of glaze. Rather than a search for the perfect glazed object, the piece accepted a wider variety of occurrences, not only ‘happy’, graceful accidents but also ‘unhappy’ ones and also less spectacular glazes, something akin to a catalogue.

With the cobblestones, the glazed object is first repudiated as the main individual objective for my artistic practice, re-accepted - the glaze remains the object of practice albeit as a group - and perceived objectively, accepted in its various occurrences without aesthetic choice and discard. The final piece consists of individual test objects. The research itself has become the final artwork. This allows what Winnicott described as a process highly dependent on there being a *kiln/glaze* [mother] (or part of *kiln/glaze* [mother]) able to accomplish a 'to and fro' between being that which the *artist* [baby] has a capacity to find and (alternatively) being *itself* [herself] waiting to be found. The ‘to and fro’ was achieved as the process of testing is all-encompassing and retains both what the artist is ready to find and what is found or discovered.

This led me to experience magical control and a marriage of a feeling of omnipotence with the control of the actual. A feeling of confidence and intimacy with the glazes arose in which I felt a desire for differentiation and not a loss of self. Glaze acquired its individuality. It became objective. I/it were ready to be separate. Yet to be separate does not mean separation and loss of interest. I felt ready to meet and play with glaze. I felt an urge to play. I imagined playgrounds on which the glaze could develop, enabling it to fully explore its own ability to play. But not only glaze would play, so would I, the artist, paving the way for an artistic relationship.

With a desire to play in mind, I rejected the making of a form. Play is to relate. It is an attempt to overcome the reduction of reality to the subject-object antinomy. There is no omnipotent artist at one end of the artistic process and no completed and compliant object at the other end. There is a dynamic

relation between subject and object, an encounter encompassing an element of chance and randomness. I wanted to challenge the omnipotence of the maker, to challenge his creativity. The object will be found rather than made, and possibly in this process, the subject too will be found.

In September of 2007 I had made a series of ‘automatic’ pieces in which I already approached the possibility of play. Yet in this first series I did not investigate the play with the glaze itself.

For this new series, I identified objects around the studio and the house that I thought could become playgrounds when offered to a running and drips-prone glaze. From the objects at hand, I chose a measuring jug, an iron, a bunch of bananas and a pancake pan.

The objects found or ‘grasped’ to become material substrates for the glaze-play are objects that have meaning for the studio and the domestic space of the kitchen. This equivalence and proximity between kitchen and studio revolves around well-known analogies between oven and kiln, baking and firing, playing and working, infant and artist. The transformational process is facilitated, in infancy by the mother, in my ceramic practice by the kiln.

Less blatant yet equally relevant is the question this analogy between artistic and domestic practice raises on the relation between labour and play. Is it a denunciation of the myths of non-work that surround both practices (artist as

genius, mother as natural) or an invitation to allow, through play, a flow of ‘jouissance’ in both artistic and domestic practice?

In this new attempt to play with the ‘found’, the revealing of the unconscious is only one of the possibilities at stake. Equally important for me was the possibility for the glaze to play too. Play becomes a relation between the found object, the maker and the glaze. Play is not only a space within, a space of fusion and unity. It is a space in-between. It is transitional. It allows for differentiation.

The measuring jug

For the potter, a jug requires a properly made spout to prevent dripping. In this sense, the jug is an anti-drip: “the lip of the spout should cut the flow effectively and preferably without a drip. A thin section or sharp edge to the tip is the most effective non-drip finish” (Hamer, 1997, p.324). Yet when tipped upside down I imagined the jug “that fills drip by drip” could, once covered with glaze and slightly tilted, reverse the process and become a ‘drip paradise’ through a cantilever between its lips and its plinth. The container of liquid becomes substrate for displaying liquid. The container is inverted, ‘killed’.

The bunch of bananas

The bunch of bananas was placed as if it were a slide resembling a ski-jump to allow the glaze to run over it, gain momentum and eventually drip as it slows down towards the tip of the fruit.

But the bunch of bananas is food too, children's food. It becomes symbolic nourishment, meaning,

The steam iron

The iron uses both the cantilever and the slide effect. It adds yet another one: the funnelling of the drips towards the pointed end.

The iron conveys feelings of smoothness, obliterating creases and chaos. Does this diving position signify enhancement of its potentiality or the imminence of crash?

The pancake pan

The pancake pan can be cantilever, slide, and funnel. Moreover, it offers a large central flat pooling area where the glaze could accumulate yet run.

All the objects were made using a new process within my practice with each covered with a slab of clay in the hope of masking or veiling them. Voids were filled. All stood above ground on a plinth. A splash mould of each covered object was made and porcelain slip-casts of the objects produced. After biscuit-firing they were covered with ‘runny’ glazes.

Within his extensive theory of play, Winnicott identified further characteristics of play. But to what extent does *Edge* match them?

Transitional

Winnicott points out:

> Into this play area the *artist* [child] gathers objects or phenomena from external reality and uses these in the service of some sample derived from inner or personal reality. Without hallucinating the *artist* [child] puts out a sample of dream potential and lives with this sample in a chosen setting of fragments from external reality (after Winnicott, 1971, p.51)

Edge was rooted within and encompassed elements of my personal reality: my immediate daily surroundings: the domestic, be it the studio or the home. Paradoxically those objects were both intimate and impersonal, a paradox I will address later. The glaze played the main part of the external phenomena.

The internal dream element was the occurrence of ‘happy’ surprises in the glaze, creating a feeling akin to magic.

The play took place in a space between inner and outer reality. This area of play is not inner psychic reality. It is outside the individual but it is not entirely the external world. In play, the *artist* [child] manipulates external phenomena in the service of the dream and invests chosen external phenomena with dream meaning and feeling (after Winnicott, 1971, p.51).

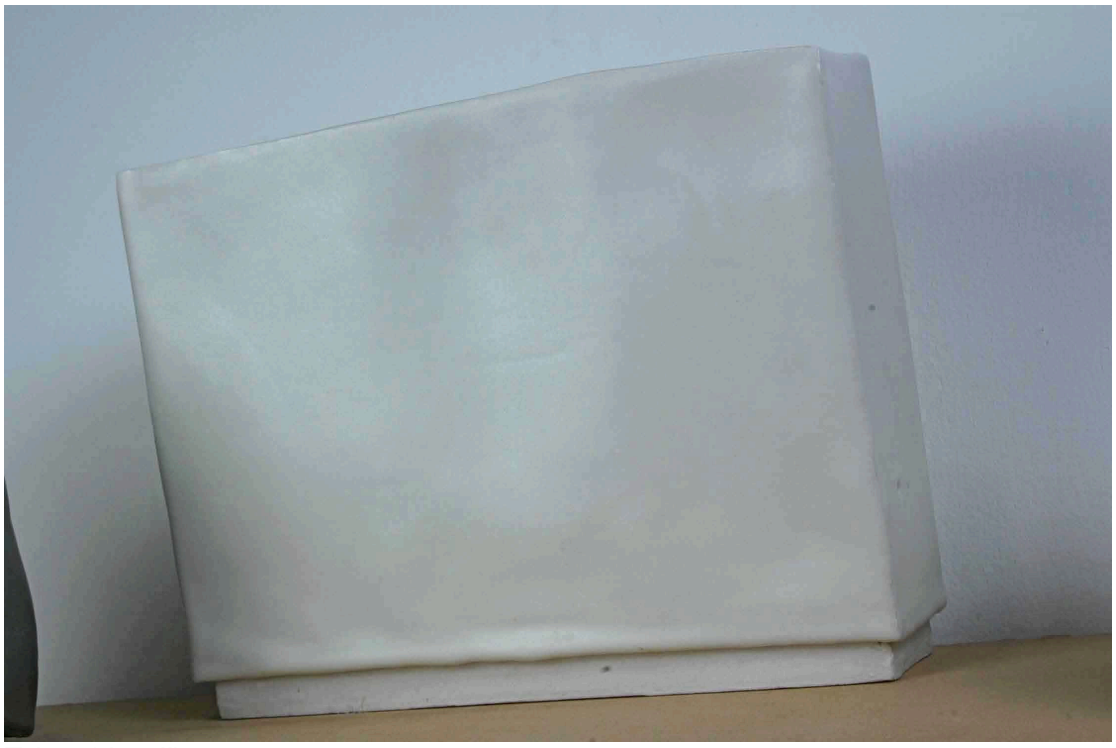
Earlier I pointed out the transitional element in this series of pieces as play becomes a relation between several elements involved: the found object, the maker and the glaze. In the former series of the automatic pieces of 2007, playfulness did not seem to be reciprocal and the glaze was not allowed to play. There did not seem to be a ‘between’, there was not any transitional space, at least not with the glazes, which were not manipulated in the service of the dream.

Importantly, *Edge* is also transitional (in the sense of intermediate) as it juxtaposes two series of work. On the one hand, three enclosed forms in the manner of previous works. On the other, sixteen cast domestic objects of the new work. The three enclosed forms resemble buildings and thus share with the other objects a reference to the domestic. In spite of their being covered with runny glazes, they do not convey a similar feeling of precariousness, let alone for their display on the tilted shelf or for a crack in one of them. Their display in a group and above eye level makes it more difficult for the beholder

to experience merging and fusion with the object as initially intended and thus there is now a far greater awareness of them as forms.

Edge is a transition between an endeavour to classify and order *(the cobblestones)* and an excess of flux, the 'jouissance', the disordering of order; the Appolonian and the Dionysian.

The running of the glazes, the dynamic position of the objects (the jug taking off, the diving iron, the flying pan) and the tilted shelf further connote a sense of imminent movement, an element of the transitional. It is a piece in transit, dynamic, in flux, in 'play'. It is not static.



Edge (detail) – 29x22x9

Edge (detail) – 28x17x16

Edge (detail) – 24x22x12

Edge (detail) – 24x22x12

Surprising

The play was spontaneous and came as a surprise, an important element when making the piece. The idea of playground was also a surprise, the found objects were a surprise, their making a surprise. For Winnicott, surprise is an important element of play. The significant moment in playing is that at which the *artist* [child] surprises himself or herself. It is not the moment of my clever interpretation that is significant (Winnicott, 1971). Interpretation outside the ripeness of the material is indoctrination and produces compliance (Winnicott, 1960a). […] Playing has to be spontaneous, and not compliant or acquiescent (after Winnicott, 1971, p.51).

Non-seductive

Excellence in making and good crafting were not key elements. Nor was their negation in a provocative way, which could be interpreted as negative compliance. I discarded both compliance with professional excellence and any endeavour to seduce, which Winnicott also warned against: in seduction some external agency exploits the *artist's* [child's] instincts and helps to annihilate the [child's] sense of existing as an autonomous unit, making playing impossible (cf. Khan, 1964) (after Winnicott, 1971, p.51).

Exciting

For Winnicott “play is inherently exciting” (Winnicott, 1971, p.52).
For me the making of the work was essentially satisfying and exciting. It is the excitement and pleasure of the unknown, of the possibility of discovery, of change, at the centre of the transitional. At the same time it led to a certain degree of anxiety, triggered by the feeling of entering unfamiliar territory.
This excitement is a feeling resembling what Nietzsche described as the “primordial joy of the Dyonisian” in *The Birth of Tragedy*:

> we must recognize a Dionysian phenomenon: again and again it reveals to us the playful construction and destruction of the individual world as the overflow of a primordial delight. Thus the dark Heraclitus compares the world-building force to a playing child that places stones here and there and builds sand hills only to overthrow them again (Nietzsche, 1872, p.24).

This image of a playing child and the pleasure and excitement associated with it are for Nietzsche the definition of the aesthetic phenomenon in which “even the ugly and disharmonic are part of an artistic game that the will in the eternal amplitude of its pleasure plays with itself” (Nietzsche, 1872, p.24). Nietzsche advocates excitement and intoxication in play, the ultimate affirmation of life, a trancelike state that creates art (Pérez-Gómez, 2006, p.24).

Precariousness

The way *Edge* was shown at the interim show 2009 suggested precariousness. Pieces were placed on a shelf that was tilting forward and from which fall seemed a constant threat. The pieces melting away and collapsing further conveying the impression of the precarious.

The precariousness of the work is not only formal or demonstrative it is also ontological. It is part of play. This is partly because it is on the theoretical line between inner and outer realities, with the later possibly conflicting with the former in a sudden “reality clash”. As Winnicott wrote:

> Playing is inherently exciting and precarious. This characteristic derives not from instinctual arousal but from the precariousness that belongs to the interplay in the child's mind of that which is subjective (near-hallucination) and that which is objectively perceived (actual, or shared reality) (Winnicott, 1971, p.52).

Winnicott refers to “the precariousness of magic itself, magic that arouse in the intimacy of a relationship found to be reliable” (Winnicott, 1971, p.48).

These feelings of magic, grace or wonder are important elements of my artistic practice with ceramic glazes. When opening up the kiln, I confront the objectivity of outer reality. Will the dream come to life? Will the glazed object trigger and foster the dream? I hope for an encounter beyond plan, beyond will, beyond craft and design and beyond knowledge. An encounter in which

> the disclosure of beauty and meaning […] has the capacity of changing one's life in the vivid present -exactly like magic, or an erotic encounter. Like falling in love, it strikes a blow that reveals reality as is. Thus, it can be said to embody knowledge, but rather than clear logic, it is knowledge understood in the Biblical sense: a carnal, fully sexual and therefore opaque experience of truth (Pérez-Gómez, 2006, p.109).

Following Winnicott, for this magical encounter to happen, trust and reliability are required. Intimacy does not mean control or predictability. It is a loving relationship, one, which can marvel at otherness and allows for both fusion and differentiation. And whereas the magic of the encounter can be deemed precarious and uncertain as to its outcome, love brings in an element of reliability or one through which the paradoxical simultaneity of unity and heterogeneity is overcome.

Aesthetics of precariousness

Precariousness is not the monopoly of magic and play. Nicolas Bourriaud argues it is also the ethics of contemporary art practice.

> The contemporary artwork does not rightfully occupy a position in a field, but presents itself as an object of negotiation, caught up in a cross-border trade which confronts different disciplines, traditions or concepts. It is this ontological precariousness that is the foundation of contemporary aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2009b, p.32).

His analysis is based on the precarious state of the consumer and the disposable society in which we live, one of “liquid modernity, a society of generalized disposability, nudged from behind by the horror of expiry, where nothing is more decried than the steadfastness, stickiness, viscosity of things inanimate and animate alike” (Bauman, 2005, p.3). Contemporary art practice not only resists this instability, it also flourishes on it leading to a precarious regime of aesthetics based on speed, intermittence, blurring and fragility and which significantly is not to be confused with demonstrative properties and outward appearance of the immaterial or ephemeral character of the artwork: “precariousness now imbues all artistic production with its uncertain hues and constitutes an intellectual substrate, an ideological backdrip before which all forms pass in review. In short, precariousness now pervades the entirety of the contemporary aesthetic” (Bourriaud, 2009a, p.83). Bourriaud contends that art has drawn new strength from precariousness, leading to new forms of

culture and new types of formal writing. He distinguishes three main patterns in precarious aesthetics: transcoding, flickering and blurring.

- Permanent Transcoding (Formal Nomadism) describes the process of production and processing of forms, waiting in translation, instable, spectral, always abolishing the original form and surfacing as transitory incarnations.
- Flickering (Intermittences) is the specific regime of intermittence of perception but it is also associated with a flickering reality where the present lags behind itself as is pointed out by Jacques Derrida (Différance as the gap between being and meaning).
- Blurring (The Indiscernible)

Bourriaud analyses the political programme of contemporary art within a social body seen as a "disparate collection of structures, institutions and social practices". The content of contemporary art is to confirm the precarious nature of social reality: "maintaining the world in a precarious state or, in other words, permanently affirming the transitory, circumstantial nature of the institutions that partition the state and of the rules that govern individual or collective behaviour" (Bourriaud, 2009b, p.36). According to Bourriaud, by demonstrating through mimicry the precariousness of social reality and institutions, contemporary art makes change possible. Contemporary art thus entails a political programme both "more effective (in the sense that it generates real effects) and ambitious (insofar as it refers to every aspect of political reality)" (Bourriaud, 2009b, p.36).

How does the piece *Edge* partake in the precarious aesthetic regime of contemporary art? Is it excluded by its high degree of material solidity and its commitment to a medium? Can it be viewed as political?

In the glazes I use, there is a preference for low viscosity (the property of resistance to flow) and demonstration of liquidity in the glazes I use, very much akin to Bauman's description of a 'liquid modernity'.

The permanent transcoding seems also present in the process used for making the cast pieces: a real object has been chosen and then covered with clay with a view towards transformation and veiling. The object is a spectre of the original, in which the former is eventually abolished. By implication, it is different from free modelling or modelling from a model where the form does not encompass the original. Making the objects in *Edge* resembles a game of Chinese whispers. The forming of the model is yet another translation as is each cast taken from the mould. Similarly, the glaze further veils and disguises.

The flickering can be seen in the gap between being and meaning. The piece's meaning is not given or prescribed. It possibly emerges in retrospect, in the wake of the making. The process of deciding how to show *Edge* for the interim show is a useful example of deferred sense making. What seemed at first a random display surfaced as a possible narrative on the precariousness of the domestic, an unsettling still life.

Blurring/veiling was central to the process of covering the objects with clay, the glazing/firing process even more so.

In terms of political programme or at least of a possible social resonance, the piece can be read as stressing out the precarious nature of a constructed social reality, that of domestic life. Domestic items, symbols of architectural houses (the tower block [community housing], the house), and anthropomorphic symbols (the jugs have been described as half-heads) are set on the edge of a tilted shelf. The position of the tilted shelf at eye level (1.60m) offers the opportunity to see the liquidity and precariousness of constructs where those are the most blatant: from underneath, where drips form.

Unlike Bourriaud's truly political art, the social resonance of *Edge* does not have an undertone of political denunciation, engagement or resistance but rather that of empathy and compassion: the intrinsic fragility of the domestic is

experienced and shared with the beholder as fall and collapse also threatens him/her directly and physically.

The poetics of play

Play is an important element of the piece *Edge*. How does this relate to research into the poetics of glaze? Could the ludic possible entail new poetic dimensions that I have not yet encountered? Could play shed a fresh critical light on the poetics of glaze? Here I identify the poetic elements at work specifically in this piece but also more generally in the concept of play.

I will use the following lenses and themes as ways to address this issue:

- The Surrealist ludic
- Revolutionary play and undecidability
- Laughter
- Jouissance

The Surrealist ludic

The use of play and games by the Surrealist poets provides insights into possible relations between play and poetry, especially in terms of methodologies and processes devised for artistic and poetic practice.

“It is not to belittle Surrealist activity to consider it as a game, in fact as The Great Game” writes Philippe Audouin (Audouin, 1964).

The Surrealist ludic consists of processes and strategies with chance being its central operative principle. For the Surrealists, chance is understood “not as fully random coincidence but as the unconscious contriving to place the subject in situations favourable to a traumatic return of the repressed” (Laxton, 2003, p.3).

Surrealist games and procedures include among many others ‘Surrealist Errance’ (an aimless wandering in the city’s streets meant to encourage the eruption of unconscious images into the perceptual field), ‘Cadavre Exquis’ (a language or a visual game), Collages, Automatic Writing, Collaborative Poems…

In relation to *Edge*, Breton’s description in *Mad Love* offers another Surrealist strategy, which is the finding of an object ‘trouvaille’ that serves “exactly the same purpose as the dream, in the sense that it frees the individual from paralyzing affective scruples, comforts him and makes him understand that the obstacle he might have thought insurmountable is cleared” (Breton, 1937, p.32-33).

In my first attempt in September 2007 to use automaticity as a random strategy to make pieces, I quickly realized that I could not keep up with Breton’s diktat to reject human volition and control through automaticity. I felt I had reached what were the limits of this Surrealist strategy: there is always an

editing of sorts, even if it only consists in making choices of which pieces should be kept and which rejected.

However, this other series of pieces with the found objects that led to *Edge* seems more in keeping with the objectives set by Breton in this new process of the 'trouvaille'. The objects I eventually cast were genuinely 'found'.

In this first phase of making the cast pieces (from selecting the 'found' objects to their moulding and casting), the emphasis was on the finding the objects rather than on making them. The final phase of displaying the pieces seemed equally random yet psychoanalytically significant.

Can glaze be read as part of a Surrealist ludic? This is defined by the art historian Susan Laxton as "an early deployment of chance to militate against means/end rationality" (Laxton, 2003, p.4). When writing about earlier pieces I looked at how my concern with glaze is an endeavour to escape the idea of craftsmanship, technique and authorship not unlike Surrealist strategies. I drew the conclusion that a poetic dimension of glaze lies precisely in the tension between unpredictability and control, between self-born and constructed. Whereas chance and indeterminacy are used predominantly with a view to investigate the mind, glaze as a natural process could first appear devoid of any connection with Surrealist principles. I will come back to this later and investigate how Breton paralleled Natural processes and the artist's psyche, thus opening the way for a poetic analogy based upon their convergence.

Revolutionary play and undecidability

Traditionally, play is seen to convey a strong connotation of futility and unimportance. A widely accepted definition of play was given by Johan Huizinga:

> Play is a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is 'different' from 'ordinary' life (Huizinga, 1938, p.28).

Susan Laxton demonstrates that with this definition there seems little at stake.

> Play comes by its connotations of frivolity and un-productivity to this dominant characteristic: it exists at a remove from a reality driven by practical necessities and its activities have no consequences in that reality. It is conceived as bounded or, to use a term familiar within the discourse of modernism, autonomous. In philosophy, play is any pursuit undertaken for its own sake: it is neither conceptual nor sensuous; it has no stake in intellectual or material worlds; it doesn't matter (Laxton, 2003, p.5)

Winnicott who saw play as a transitional space between inner and outer reality disputes this unimportance and autonomy. This unimportance and autonomy are also out of place with the ambitious and far-reaching goals of

the Surrealists. Laxton further shows important contradictions in the philosophical use of the concept: “Play is claimed as the underlying justification for such radically opposed concepts as Schiller’s autonomous aesthetics and Nietzsche’s Dionysian excesses” (Laxton, 2003, p.5).

But those contradictions and paradoxes, this ‘undecidability’ of play (Derrida, 1994), are also blatant in the wide array of definitions and contradictions.

> To play is to engage – to put into play; yet to play is to disengage from consequence. Play is artificial, as in mimetic illusions, yet it is characterized as a primal impulse. It is useless and it produces nothing, yet is understood psychologically as a form of practice, trial action for life. It is constructive, as when the smooth play of machine parts keeps up production, and it is destructive, as when too much play in a part can bring the whole to a catastrophic halt. Play claims to be free – it cannot be coerced – yet it is valued for the restrictions that keep it circumscribed from life (Laxton, 2003, p.5).

Laxton concludes to the indeterminacy of play, a conundrum in which its ‘eccentricity’ and lack of limits is also its power. In the wake of this indeterminacy and undecidability, the Surrealist ludic is viewed by Laxton as a fundamentally subversive phenomenon. In this respect, Surrealist play is akin to a kind of provocative magic with an underlying political programme, a revolutionary intent (Gooding, 1995).

If Surrealist poetry, through play, is essentially subversive, poetic practices in general can also be seen as set against the normative, questioning admitted usages of language. The position of poetic language is double and ambivalent. It is the enemy within and without, recognizing the necessity for meaning and signification yet questioning it and creating new ones. Poetry entails a revolutionary intent (distinct from any political programme); one of its objectives is that of a rediscovery of language or of the experience of its creation. In his *Defence of Poetry*, Shelley speaks of poetry as “connate with the origin of man” and every language “near its source is in itself the chaos of a cyclic poem” (Shelley, 1821). Revolution is the replacement of an order by a new one, a new origin and source.

In her seminal book *Revolution in Poetic Language* Julia Kristeva defines poetic language as both a rejection of social codes entailed within the very structure of language and a resort to an experience of madness pressing for freedom. Poetic language is the space where ‘jouissance’ transits through code to transform it (akin to a transitional space). It is a practice of negativity, break-up and revolution through language and geared towards experiencing the possibilities, the risks and the limits of the subject within the social whole. Ultimately, the practice of poetic language leads to questioning all practices.

In contrast to earlier pieces, *Edge* moves away from abstraction to enter the realm of figuration and symbolic form. It shares with poetic language a similar ambiguity: It is both common and intimate. The objects are known. Bananas, jug, iron, and pan are part of a common vocabulary of the domestic. But they are now loaded emotionally. Through considerating psychoanalytical

principles in the choice of objects and in their final display, a new meaning emerges which becomes the syntax of an artistic practice replicating the logic of desire and of the unconscious.

Edge not only questions language or symbols now invested with psychoanalytical meanings, it further prompts an investigation of the practice of ceramics itself. In *Edge*, the poetic may lie in a questioning and disruption of traditional ceramic practices and an underlying hierarchy between form and surface. The two terms form a binary opposition (Derrida, 1994), where each depends on the other for its meaning, eventually establishing a conceptual order in which form is privileged over surface and material. The opposition is described as hylomorphism: "matter, or 'hyle', is given shape by form, or 'morphe'. Matter in itself is inert and undifferentiated; it is the servant of form and gives it presence. It does not determine form" (Lloyd Thomas, 2007, p.3).

> In any binary opposition it is not only that the secondary term is degraded but that it is defined negatively, as 'not form'. Within such a definition there is no space for a positive appearance of the term, and therefore for the possibility of differentiation [individuation]. Hylomorphism, which understands materials [surface] as a subset of matter, does not provide a way of positively distinguishing materials and underscores the tendency to use materials as mere finishes, exchangeable and superficial. In turn, it is no surprise that materials become supplementary […] and are used to decorate or signify (Lloyd Thomas, 2007, p.4).

The use of glaze in *Edge* disrupts this oppositional logic. Glaze can be viewed as an undecidable in a Derridian sense (Derrida, 1994). “It slips across both sides of the opposition but doesn’t properly fit either. It is more than the opposition can allow. And because of that, it questions the very principle of opposition” (Collins, 1996, p.20).

Glaze is surface, material and form, the relation between form and surface is not that of submission or dominance. The balance is blurred and uncertain, displaced, ambiguous, un-decidable. Whereas, traditionally, glaze covers an object and coincides with the form it covers to become its exact surface and its skin, the glaze now uses the form to play and develop its own random qualities akin to fluidity and formlessness. The glaze does not reveal (or mask) the form. It is the form that serves the glaze. Glaze partly separates from the form, which it no longer needs to cover. It is independent, playful. It is its own form or the negation of form through formless indeterminacy and liquidity. It is an indication of a displacement of the form: the glaze does not coincide with the porcelain form it covers, it creates its own as in a “blurred mise-en-scène of the formless” (Bourriaud, 2009b, p.35).

Laughter

Basing her analysis on the poetry of Comte de Lautréamont and Stéphane Mallarmé, Kristeva likens the poetry of the former to laughter and play. Speaking of Lautréamont’s poetry she writes:

> the practice of the [poetic] text is a kind of laughter whose only explosions are those of language. The pleasure obtained from the lifting of inhibitions is immediately invested in the production of the new. Every practice which produces something new (a new device) is a practice of laughter: it obeys laughter's logic and provides the subject with laughter's advantages When practice is not laughter, there is nothing new; where there is nothing new, practice cannot be provoking: it is at best a repeated, empty act. The novelty of a practice (that of the text or any practice) indicates the jouissance invested therein and this quality of newness is the equivalent of the laughter it conceals (Kristeva, 1974, p.225).

The proximity between play and laughter is blatant. Her description of the necessity of laughter for the emergence of the new is very similar to Winnicott‘s account of the direct relation between play and creativity: “It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality” (Winnicott, 1971, p.54). Play, laughter and poetic practice can have in common a profoundly subversive and creative position set against the normative, the known and the established; against what Winnicott denounced as compliance.

Edge although quite dramatic and tragic in its undertones, entails equally a dimension of laughter. Following Freud in his review of literature on jokes (Freud, 1905), *Edge* can be seen as a “playful judgement” (Fischer, 1889) on

the precariousness of domestic life. *Edge* is also an attempt to "bind into a unity, several ideas which are in fact alien to one another both in their internal content and in the nexus to which they belong" (Vischer, 1857, p.422): aesthetics and domestic, contemplation and excitement, laughter and tragedy… It meets herewith another definition of joking as a rapprochement of the dissimilar. Edge was also an experience of freedom: I broke away from former practices and aspirations: the aesthetic, the contemplative, the sublime... And Freud quotes Richter (Richter, 1804): "Freedom produces jokes and jokes produce freedom."

The paradox between laughter and the tragic is only apparent. For Nietzsche, it is precisely the Dionysiac, joined with the need to impose form, the Appolonian which produces the tragic and for Deleuze "What is tragic is joy" (Deleuze, 1962, p.20).

Jouissance

Poetic language can be understood as an experience of the materiality of language and of the individual's sensibility to this materiality beyond that of coded and normalised forms upon which the possibility of language ultimately depends. The practice of writing becomes poetic when it addresses the materiality of language, the signifier (Saussure, 1913).

The signifier is the material dimension of language. It is different from the signified, which is its intelligibility. The relation to the signifier is individual and

unique and it questions the institutionalized dimension of language of the signified; collective norms striving to reduce language to unified codes and thus normalizing individual perception. This normalization through the arbitrary process of language entails potentially the loss of individual desire and pleasure.

Kristeva sees precisely art and the poetic as the result of the flow of 'jouissance' into language. 'Jouissance' (enjoyment, excitement but also orgasm in the French language) is to be defined as the result of the subject's drive to transgress limitations placed upon pleasure (Taylor, 2001, p.196). The prohibition of 'jouissance' is a constitutive element of the linguistic and social field that Lacan calls the Symbolic. This flow of 'jouissance' into language defining the poetic is similar to the concept of text of bliss developed by Roland Barthes; it "unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language" (Barthes, 1975, p.14).

Breton equally views in the poetic practice a means to liberate and recreate desire (Breton, 1924) and desire has become the sole unifying principle of psychic life. "Desire, the only motive of the world, desire, the only rigor humans must be acquainted with" (Breton, 1937, p.88).

Desire and 'jouissance' are not purely sexual or instinctual dimensions but are more akin to a surge of energy; it is excitement for the unknown and for the new, stemming from transgressive and subversive behaviour. Winnicott does

warn from “bodily excitement in erotogenic zones [that] constantly threatens playing, and therefore threatens the child's sense of existing as a person” (Winnicott, 1971, p.52). Further, he stresses that “the pleasurable element in playing carries with it the implication that the instinctual arousal is not excessive […] Playing can be said to reach its own saturation point, which refers to the capacity to contain experience” (ibid., p.52).

In *Edge*, the instinctual, sexual dimension of jouissance can probably be seen in the phallic allegory of the bananas and the pan but even more poetically in the paradoxical simultaneity of fire and water, solidity and liquidity, expressed in the glaze but also in the choice of objects: the iron (through steam production) and to another extent the pancake pan (the hardening of liquid paste through cooking) link water and fire. “The water, mad for its swirls like a real mane of water. To glide like water into pure sparkle…” (Breton, 1937, p.6).

What can be seen as a paradox is the very moment of ‘jouissance’ in its instantaneity and indefinite persistence.

> It is there –right in the depths of the human crucible, in this paradoxical region where the fusion of two beings who have really chosen each other renders to all things the lost colors of the times of ancient suns, where however, loneliness rages also, in one of nature’s fantasies which around the Alaskan craters, demands that under the ashes there remain snow (Breton, 1937, p.8).

Desire, for Breton, not only commands humans, it equally commands nature. There is a profound relation between the surge of desire in poetic practice and that of nature in its natural manifestations. For Breton, the possibility of convergence between Man and Nature in its constant formation and destruction leads to another possibility of the poetic. Breton, when defining the 'convulsive beauty', "the only beauty which should concern us" (Breton, 1937, p.88) describes the process of stalagmites' formation through drips in a grotto and concludes with an eulogy to cristal:

> there could be no higher artistic teaching than that of crystal […] Please understand that this affirmation is constantly and categorically opposed, for me, to everything that attempts, aesthetically or morally, to found moral beauty on a willed work of voluntary perfection that humans must desire to do. On the contrary, I have never stopped advocating creation, spontaneous action, insofar as the crystal, non-perfectible by definition, is the perfect example of it" (Breton, 1937, p.10-11).

Breton adds another condition to which convulsive beauty must respond. It is found and the 'trouvaille' is always superior to what is wished for. "This 'trouvaille' is enough to undo the beauty of everything beside it. In it alone can we recognize the marvellous precipitate of desire" (Breton, 1937, p.14). For Breton the poetic analogy between Man's surge of desire and Nature is based upon a possible convergence of the two, leading to symbiosis.

Earlier in the research I looked at this desire for symbiosis and the merging of boundaries as a central operative concern in my artistic interest for glazes and in earlier series of pieces.

Breton marvels at mineral formations. His obvious aesthetic interest for the drips is strikingly reminiscent of some of my own description of glazes. The last condition for convulsive beauty (the dissimilarity sought after between the object wished for and the object found) is expressed similarly in the idea of 'happy' accidents and unexpectedness I hope for in glazes. Winnicott's development scale, demonstrated this interest for merging was not operative (or not predominantly operative) in the piece *Edge*. My interest consists in play and differentiation not in fusion.

In *Mad Love,* where Breton develops the notion of convulsive beauty, the latter is ultimately related to the experience of sexual love, an experience of fusion and overcoming of boundaries. For Winnicott if love equally comes into play, it is far from being sexual or regressive. Winnicott's love is the condition for differentiation. It is love based upon alterity not unity. Motherly love? It too has probably strong sexual and erotic elements. Rather maybe two phases of love, allowing for its evolution in time.

The Spanish poet Antonio Machado developed the concept of 'otherness' whereby the unavoidable failure of the loving (merging) impulse leads us to experience the irreparable otherness, the essential heterogeneity of being which we can only access and accept through poetical faith away from

reason. Once the 'other' has been viewed as he/she is not and unity has proved impossible, it is useful to consider the other as he/she is and endow it with its rich and inexhaustible heterogeneity (Abellan, 1979).

Differentiating thought is the conscience of all things and it can be accessed through poetic thinking, which remains open to the inexhaustible wealth of both reality and imagination. Machado concludes to a paradoxical indissoluble unity in heterogeneity, which only the poet can address.

In love, in poetic practice, in the transitional space and in the space created by a glaze "thirst and satisfaction are joined together: at once fruit and mouth" (Paz, 1956, p.119-120).

Glaze is the space of desire, a poetic space of love in both its merging, and differentiating dimensions, which is what the poet René Char demands of poetry: "Realized love of desire remained desire".

> The fundamental nature of this space [erotic space] is lack rather than the possession of plenitude […] It is not a space that entrenches systems of power, seeking perfect efficiency, comfort, and control over time. Rather it is a revelation of enigmatic depth, of density and uncertainty […] depth is again mysterious and light recovers its qualities as lux, lumen and splendor and is once again endowed with shadows; desire is exacerbated and, in its bittersweetness, is elevated to a way of life (Pérez-Gómez, 2006, p.64-65).

THE MAKING OF THE POETIC SPACE

Mythologies

In the mythology of crafts, it is striking to observe how blacksmithing has been endowed with positive values whereas pottery seemed depreciated in most mythological accounts. Whilst the Bible's Genesis has referenced the importance of pottery, European mythologies and cosmogonies relating to pottery are scarce if any (Ribault, 2009, p.59).

Claude Lévi-Strauss notes:

> One might conjecture that, in contrast to ancient China, where potters and blacksmiths were on an almost equal footing, popular European thought viewed the potter's work as a paler version of the smith's art. The latter would then become the sole repository of the magical and mystical values that might also have been conferred on pottery. Smithing and pottery are the two great arts of fire; however, one digs deeper for ore than for clay, metal requires higher temperatures, and, on the whole, when compared to the smith's, the potter's work looks far from heroic (Lévi-Strauss, 1985, p.10).

Lévi-Strauss is not completely right when pointing out that the temperatures of pottery are less than those of metalwork. Some metals melt already at 600°C.

Yet it does not weaken his point, on the opposite, in spite of the possibility of heroism, pottery never had the prestige of metalwork.

In the mythologies of Indian American tribes - which unlike Europeans rarely knew metalwork - Lévi-Strauss points to the negativity, pottery was very often imbued with. In his view it is the formlessness of clay from which stem its malleability and plasticity that account for its negativity: “Pottery can be correlated and opposed to metalwork by the fact that with fire the potter makes soft matter hard, whereas the smith, also urging fire, makes hard metal malleable” (Lévi-Strauss, 1985, p.19).

It is easy to understand why the ability to make the hard malleable is more valued than the ability to model what is already soft: metalwork is the expression of strength and domination of the metalworker over its material. Metal is beaten. Symbolically, in the making process, pottery is not appropriate to show, express or demonstrate Man’s (man’s) strength. Consequently pottery was often viewed as a feminine activity or one reserved to women: in most tribes only woman would approach clay and make pots and in the mythology, pottery and clay had been produced or given by goddesses. Pottery is gendered. That it is feminine has several reasons. One of them lays in its inability to show the power and control ability of who works with it. But there are other profound and compelling reasons I will investigate later in the research. Metalwork on the other hand is much better suited to demonstrate yielding. Man is man when overcoming what resists him. Lévi-Strauss thought the higher the temperature, the more spectacular the show.

Latin American Indians did not use glazes let alone high temperature glazes: they fired at 950°C. Within the field of European studio pottery, there is a sort of prestige borne by those who work with higher temperature. That glaze incorporates metal oxides could put glaze practitioners on a par again with the blacksmiths. A glaze consists of solid rocks, minerals and metal ores that have been grounded and which will eventually turn viscous when melt in the kiln. The ability to transform materials measured along the scale of hardness and resistance is similar between the glaze practitioner and the blacksmith: turning hard into soft and not soft into hard as does the work of an Indian American Potter. Accordingly, glaze by turning stones and ores into water (what resembles a viscous liquid when molten) seems better suited to express strength and domination. Glaze practitioners are rarely women and with the birth of independent studio pottery pioneered in France by Bernard de Palissy in the XVIth century, the practice of ceramics and especially glazed ceramics was often a display of heroic and virile qualities: solitude, independence, autarky, will, and physical and intellectual strength. Bernard de Palissy is shown burning his own furniture to complete a firing, Chaplet and Carriès died dramatical masculine deaths. Delaherche, Dalpayrat, Decoeur, Ben Lisa, Girel, Cazeneuve developed quasi-mythological independences. Andoche Praudel, another French glaze practitioner once admitted having chosen his artist's name Andoche (the one who is weak and sick in his local dialect) as a provocation to those manly qualities but thus acknowledging their significance.

Glazes however are probably too little known an activity, too technical and secret their composition or too recent a practice to reverse mythologies and cosmogonies. Yet what matters here are not the myths (Lévi-Strauss only focused on those of the Americas) but rather the importance of displaying manly qualities in the practice of glazes, which seem to reverse or compensate the negativity and femininity traditionally associated with the practice of ceramics.

Further in his account, Lévi-Strauss demonstrates a link between pottery and jealousy. The women pottery was associated with in the mythological accounts of Indian American tribes were often characterized by their jealousy and Lévi-Strauss unveils and coins the jealous potter:

> Whatever her name - Mother-Earth, Grandmother of Clay, Mistress of Clay and Earthenware, etc. – the patron goddess of pottery is benefactress. Depending on the versions, humans are indebted to her for the precious raw material or for the shaping, firing, or decorating techniques. But, as we have seen, she is jealous and fussy (Lévi-Strauss, 1985, p.28).

First, jealousy describes the constraints forced upon the material. It is what Lévi-Strauss describes as the jealousy of the demiurge: “Imposing a form on matter does not mean simply imposing a discipline. The raw material, pulled out of the limitless range of potentialities, is lessened by the fact that, of all

these potentialities, only a few will be realized: all demiurges, from Prometheus to Mukat, have jealous natures" (Lévi-Strauss, 1985, p.178).

"On a small scale, the potter is another demiurge" (Lévi-Strauss, 1985, p.236) exerting a constraint on a free material. This is not only true of pottery and most arts impose a form upon a material but with pottery the distance between material and form is minimal and the transformation is very direct, deprived of intermediate steps. The constraint is all the more significant as the raw material of clay is "the 'crudest' of all raw materials known and used by Man. With its coarse appearance and its total lack of organization, it confronts man's sight and touch, even his understanding, with its primacy and the massive presence of its shapelessness" (Lévi-Strauss, 1985, p.177).

Lévi-Strauss points to a chain of constraints and the container which has been shaped (constrained) by the potter will itself later constrain the vegetal and animal substances it holds to "culturalise" them.

Last, the technical difficulties of making and firing pottery, the whimsical and very risky character of its outcomes and Lévi-Strauss especially emphasizes repeatedly the occurrence of cracks, have generated attitudes and practices of protectiveness and defensiveness. Lévi-Strauss cites Foster who questions the conservative attitude of potters' families in Mexico and believes that

> [The] reason lies in the nature of the productive process itself, which places a premium on strict adherence to tried and proven ways as means of avoiding economic catastrophe. Pottery-making is a tricky business at best and there are literally hundreds of points at which a slight variation in materials or process will adversely affect the result. A

> slight difference in raw materials, in glazes, in paints, in firing temperatures – any of these may mean that a week's or a month's labor is in vain. Hence, economic security lies in duplicating to the best of the potter's ability the materials and processes he knows from experience are least likely to lead to failure. A premium is placed on hewing to a straight and narrow productive path. Straying very far from one side to the other is apt to mean economic tragedy….This breeds a basic conservatism, a caution about all new things, that carries over into the potter's outlook on life itself (Foster, 1965, cited in Lévi-Strauss, 1985, p. 178-9).

In the field of ceramic glazes, the prevailing culture of secrecy surrounding glazes' recipes is another expression of this protective and defensive attitude. It can be argued however that the numerous glaze recipe books available today have precisely put an end to the jealousy of the glaze practitioner. But the jealousy of the glaze practitioner is only a consequence or a side effect of the material's and of the processes' own resistances, and the later ones can hardly be put an end to. It is common among users (and even authors!) of a glaze recipe book to complain that most recipes do not work, but it is indeed very difficult to recreate all conditions in which a glaze was made. The number and complexity of variables at play are high. What was the exact ceramic body used? What were the firing temperature and the firing schedule? But first of all what was in the glaze? Recipes vary in their forms. Most recipes list materials. However, except in the case of Kolding glaze library, the materials are only generic denomination. Their precise geological and geographical

origin, their grade or their type are rarely listed. Yet a cornish stone or a potash feldspar can vary enormously in their composition and in their properties and the glazes that use them vary accordingly. Even were the materials precisely listed, the chances that they remain the same are low and follow complex geologic circumstances or more opportunistic commercial or production issues. To compensate for the high volatility of materials, other recipes do not list ingredients but the molecular composition of the molten glaze. This is especially the case of archaeological finds where elemental and chemical analysis by X-Ray fluorescence of a ceramic shard can provide an accurate reading of both glaze's and body's molecular composition. The molecular formula of the molten glaze can be approached by combining materials available to the practitioner and for which he/she possesses a precise molecular analysis. The resulting recreated glazes can be equivalent in their composition, yet very different in their final appearance according to how materials differed.

A major interest of the Kolding glaze library was precisely its reproducibility. Materials were listed: not only vague and imprecise categories but the exact materials used. The ceramic bodies were known and invariant; the firing schedules equally. Above all Kolding was accessible. It is now closed and the library has been transferred to Guldagergaard International Ceramic Research Center in Denmark. Whether the library, now disconnected from makers, will still be of interest is unsure.

It is the complexity of the process of glaze, which makes its access resistant, difficult and demanding, and jealousy is a narrative or an anthropomorphic equivalent for its complexity.

With the issue of recipes now raised I shall risk a comparison with cooking. Kitchen recipes rarely provide cooks with similar difficulties. The ingredients of cooking are often considered key to the success of a dish yet their choice is intuitive and judging them is accessible and immediate to those who wish to without resorting to complex molecular analysis. Lévi-Strauss draws a similar parallel between the potter's kiln and the cooking fire but he points out to the double difference made by Indian American thought:

> First, cooking fire was conquered by humans, who had to fight either animals (i.e., nature opposing culture) or the people Above (in that case, earthlings still in their natural state oppose supernatural, celestial beings).
>
> On the other hand, when pottery is at stake, humans do not identify with either side of the conflict. Placed *between* the Snakes and the Birds, they act more as witnesses to a battle that does not involve them. Instead of taking responsibility or initiative in the action, they become passive beneficiaries or accomplices.
>
> Second, […] all the myths about the origin of cooking fire agree on one point (actually they agree with experience too): conquering fire was a difficult achievement for humans, but, once they had succeeded, fire was theirs forever. But in their possession and practice of pottery, they

> are, on the contrary, constantly challenged, for the rivalry between the powers Above and the powers Below never comes to an end. Small as their part may be in the cosmic struggle, men are contaminated by the spirit of jealousy that animates these contending powers. Consequently, the practice of pottery is subject to countless rituals and fussy, cautionary measures, and this does not fail to affect the craftsmen's moral disposition (Lévi-Strauss, 1985, p.48-9).

The unveiling of the jealous female potter in Indian American mythology raises central issues for my research: strength and power, ability and control, or rather their opposite: weakness and impotence, inability and lack of control.

Pottery proves unsuitable as a medium to express the former characteristics and seems doomed to an ambiguous position and a no Man's land. But its position is only ambiguous if like Sisyphus it is fought against. Yet weakness and impotence, inability and lack of control can be accepted and become the base for an artistic practice incorporating the accidental and the flawed: cracks, splits, fissures, breaks, mistakes, failures, fault lines, chasms, gaps, seams, wounds, traumas and questions.

Ceramics by accident

In the field of ceramics, practices, styles and standards are very diverse. However, this concept of unself-conscious grace is an important element structuring both the practice and the appreciation of a certain kind of

ceramics. Bernard Leach when translating Soetsu Yanagi's thoughts raised that very issue of self-consciousness:

> I have had a sense of doubt on one main issue - the relationship between the conscious artist and the comparatively unconscious craftsman. Soetsu Yanagi turns to the artist-craftsman to act as the pilot in this dilemma because of his greater awareness, thereby indicating the power that has come to conscious man through the evolution of intellect. The results are not the same, Bach is not plainsong, Michelangelo is not Mokujiki, and Hamada's bowls are not O Ido. But they are as flowers, cultivated or wild, and who is to say which are more beautiful at that round table of Heaven (Leach, 1972, p.98).

In spite of this, Yanagi's book celebrates the Unknown Craftsman, and with it the idea of a practice irreflexive and unpretentious (Yanagi, 1972).

Similarly, Margaret Medley who pioneered a practical approach to the study of Chinese pottery of the Song dynasty entitled her research "the Chinese Potter" (Medley, 1976); equally a conceptual celebration of artistic anonymity.

In the field of ceramics, this quality of unself-conscious grace underlies the operating concepts of the material, the natural and the accidental.

In Japan, aesthetics remain very much that of the natural and ceramics often exemplify it. Wabi-Sabi is a quintessential concept of Japanese aesthetics. It was defined by Leonard Koren:

> Things wabi-sabi are suggestion of natural process. […] They can appear coarse and unrefined. They are usually made from materials not far removed from their original condition. Their craftsmanship may be impossible to discern. Things wabi-sabi may exhibit the effects of accident or they may show the result of just letting things happen by chance. Conventional aids to discernment, like the origins and names of the object makers, are of no wabi-sabi consequence (Koren, 1994, p. 38).

Before Japan, Chinese ceramics of the Tang and Song dynasty expressed similar concerns for the natural and the accidental:

> In China, the clays are often coarse and usually exposed, the glazes are thick, and crackled, and run, and occasionally skip, the brushwork is vigorous and calligraphic, not realistic and “finished”, the throwing and moulding are frank, and accidental kiln effects are frequent. The Chinese point of view is that all these qualities can be used and that they are incidental to nature rather than accidental to man (Leach, 1940).

The two concepts of natural and accidental are applicable to glazes in which “craquelés, trainées, gaufrages, chagrinés, soufflés, flambés” are happy accidents on the surface of a vessel which often account for the very interest of monochromatic glazes and their depth (Blanc, 1882). They are also applicable to forms where the irregular can become a quality and where shapes can be sought to translate an essence of the material.

Most of this draws on Japanese and Chinese Song dynasty aesthetics. But there are early western conceptual counterparts: Lucretia, Virgil, Epicurus, and Giordano Bruno for example (Winter, 1999).

With Modernity, man has been trying to dominate the world and nature:

> The creative subject has been assigned absolute supremacy over the world of objects, in order to criticize, deform and even destroy them at will, thus carrying too far that tendency towards a spiritual development which has become increasingly obvious since the Renaissance, in accordance with which Man dominates, exploits and devaluates nature through his mechanistic thought, his technical intervention and his belief in progress (Winter, 2004).

Modernity also unveiled the unconscious and became an era of suspicion and reflexivity: Paul Ricoeur famously dubbed that great triumvirate of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thought - Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud – ‘the school of suspicion’, by which he meant those thinkers who

taught us to regard with suspicion our conscious understandings and experience. ‘Beneath’ or ‘behind’ the surface lay causal forces that explained phenomena precisely because they laid bare the true meaning of those phenomena.

This was not a supportive environment for neither the natural nor the unconscious, and ceramics had a difficult time to cope with the Zeitgeist unless it mimicked or became an industry. They were otherwise confined to marginality and a role of negativity and contestation.

However, other fields underwent developments, which eventually allowed revisiting the material and the natural. In architecture, the concept of material authenticity and the movement of Brutalism raised the interest for materials, celebrating processes, concrete and blatant irregularities. Blob architecture, by designing buildings through computer manipulations rather than from physical models also experimented with the idea of the self-born. In the field of arts, By assigning the nature of the medium itself to become the object of any art form, Clement Greenberg contributed to raising the interest for materials (Greenberg, 1960), which have later become the object of many painters’ investigations: Jean Fautrier, Jean Dubuffet, Alberto Burri, Bob Law, Roxy Paine…

As an artist working in the 21st century, my interest encompasses the accidental and the natural, the self-born rather than the man-made. I developed an interest for ceramic glazes that goes beyond their use as a

color and a mere pigment. I believe ceramic glazes exceed human creativity especially through their imperfections and accidents. It has to do with surprise and wonderment.

My pieces are often made in a random, accidental way, hoping to show a nature of the material rather than man's imagination and creativity dictating a shape to it. I seem to want to do away with myself in the face of Nature. Powerlessness or lucidity? With porcelain, there is not always room for the practitioner's ego; he must cut himself off from his preoccupations. Submission? It is rather a matter of discovering a new relationship to Nature: complicity and exchange. I am aiming at a friendly relationship with Nature. My plan is not promethean, or domineering. Like a surfer, I slide, and go along with. By not trying to produce beautiful, well crafted ceramics, I hope to allow the beauty of the material to enter the work. "We normally consider stability to be the constant in life and accidents to be the exception, but it's exactly the opposite. In reality the accident is the rule and stability is the exception" (Fineman, 2004, p. 23). Many of my pieces are the result of chance, luck and accidents. But it is an incongruous concept that of an artist-cum-spectator. It contradicts the V&A's frontispiece dictum: "the excellence of every art must consist in the complete accomplishment of its purpose." Can withdrawal or even absence constitute an artistic practice? Is it opportunism? Is it empty? Is withdrawal even possible? Is it a matter of degree of involvement? It is a paradoxical concept, too, if we bear in mind that this contemplative artist is also for parts a technician and that some planning and mastering is always necessary? It should not be forgotten however, that within the potter's

intentions are included all sorts of variations depending on the nature and manner of use of his materials and ranging from the fortuitous and often highly effective skipping of a glaze to wide differences in its colour and quality, and that so long as they do not involve structural weaknesses or by their eccentricity distract from the beauty of the pot, they are acceptable to him. It is the uniformity of perfection that kills. But is a structural weakness an acceptable concept to judge why some accidents become artful and other don't? Is this just another contradiction or a key to understanding that what we call the accident might in fact only be a cusp or an unlikely balance.

Part of my artistic practice involves creating the internal and external conditions that allow accidents to enrich my work without overwhelming it. "What this requires is a delicate balance between intention and improvisation, a continual negotiation between the structuring demands of the eye and mind and the inchoate richness of the world" (of ceramics) (Fineman, 2004, p.23).

An important question is that of self-consciousness and whether a practice based on the accidental can be sustainable in the long term? What's an accident if you can provoke and master it? Without presuming a moral of the accident, need accidents be authentic and honest?

How do you raise the accidental to the level of an art-practice?

Throughout my research I have been confronted repeatedly with those questions.

My artistic practice before embarking on the PhD was based on the accidental. Essentially, this concerned the first part of the making: when throwing porcelain on the potter's wheel I was confronted with the occurrence of the unplanned. Yet, glazes and firing process seemed relatively accident-free. The issue of self-consciousness was very present in this process as it became difficult for me to escape the reality of the learning curve and the prospect of an accident-free throwing-process loomed. It is the issue of an artistic pose, akin to the loss of innocence that I most dreaded.

When embarking on my PhD research the issue of the accidental soon re-surfaced, yet unexpectedly and raising different questions. In the first part of the research between October of 2006 and January 2007 with the series of the illusory objects (a body of work related to the perception of depth through ceramic glazes), I soon faced an artistic dilemma: illusion required control but my artistic sensibility and practice on the other hand called for accidents. The process of glazes, which I had believed to be accident-free was in fact just as accident-rich as the process of throwing. What I was after in a glaze was precisely the unplanned, what seems imperfections and surprises. In the XIXth century, the art critic Charles Blanc hold accidental variations of monochromatic glazes responsible for their artistic interest and for the perception of depth they convey (Blanc, 1882, p.390-391). In this first body of work, one of the objectives of my research on the fish-scale glaze was to understand its appeal and interest within my own artistic practice. As a finished surface, it is probably the depth it creates but I believe my work not to be only about the slick realization of ideas (or effects). I am as much if not

more, concerned with the realization of the thing itself, and what happens during the process of making or failing to make – the accidental, the unplanned. Therefore, the fish scale interest is also partly grounded as a process. And as a process its interest lays in its occurrence as a natural phenomenon and in the possibility of faults and accidents. In itself already the fish-scale glaze is an accident as the scales are cracks.

The series of enclosed objects that eventually resulted in the series of the cobblestones confronted an accident-rich glazing process: the first pieces not only cracked but most of them were completely stuck to the kiln shelves. Eventually I started using artistically those accidents, which had destroyed the first pieces and transform them into drops and slits.

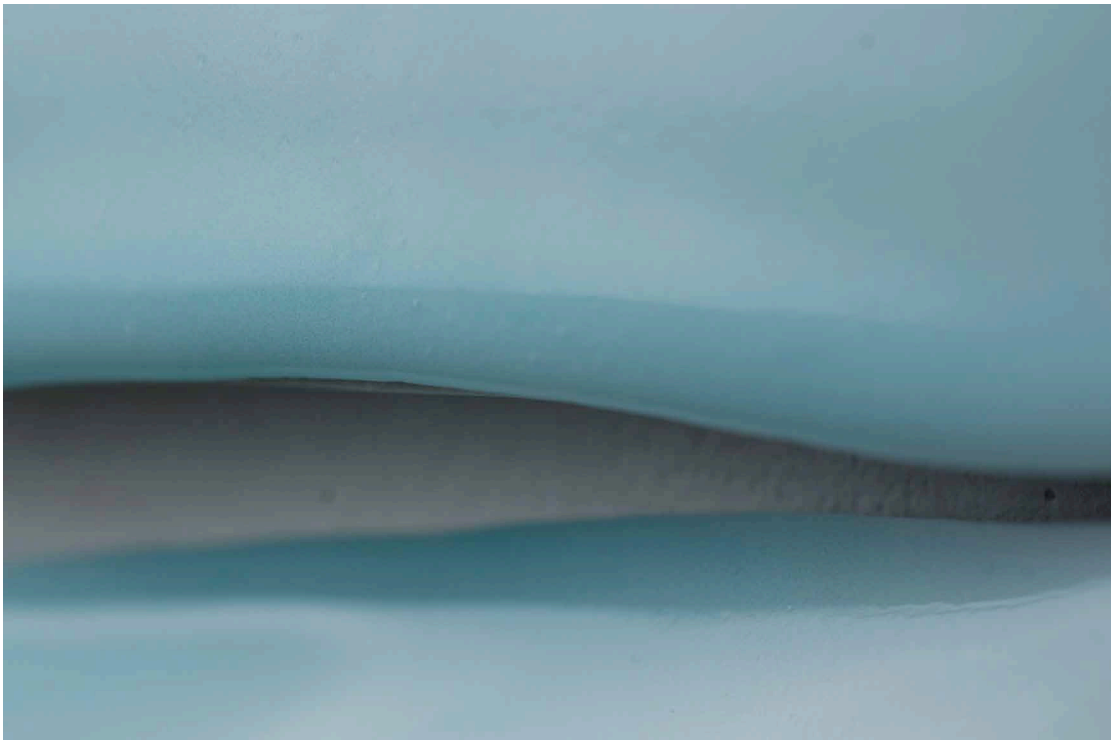
In the series of the cobblestones, the unplanned became the rule and the cobblestones are a collection of idiosyncrasies of glaze recipes, materials, firing protocols and kiln mapping. There is an editing of sorts previous to reaching the cobble stage as the glazes are first tested on tiles or shards but each cobblestone remains a test and the resulting ensemble is a celebration of the unplanned: glaze peels, crazes, pinholes, specks, flakes, blisters, bloats, crawls, dimples, streaks, starves, over-fires, runs, drips - fired on firebricks the cobblestones escape fatal destruction when stuck and can be easily unstuck and polished – the porcelain slumps, twists, cracks, warps, sometimes dunts and breaks (Fraser,1986). There is no editing of the cobblestones. They are all kept.

With the latest series of the planes, the accidental occurs at various stages as if it were now the chore of the whole process or if the process itself became the main driver for the work. First the planes are made of slabs or remains of slabs that have somehow caught my eye: a wit-and-eye activity. Those slabs are fragile, they often evolve as bits brake. Is the accident acceptable?

Is it not? Once broken, is it the same piece? Is it a new piece? Can a piece evolve? Can it be the death of the piece? If a piece has died, can its remains turn into another piece? Who decides? Is artistic licence legitimate? Does it collide with the concept of intentionality of the maker? Does someone need to be responsible? The maker? Can the material be responsible? Is it chance? Is it bad luck? Is it moral? Is it opportunism? Does moral matter? Can the intention focus on the process only and disregard the end-work? As with the paintings of Dubuffet and Pollock, the work was “discovered within the process of making the work. It was not prefigured but looked-for as a phenomenon within the process” (Smithson, 1953, p.44). Yet there is an obvious difference between the process paintings of Dubuffet and Pollock and

my own practice as the former two seem only to add whereas accidents in my process mainly retrieve: the break, the slit, the hole are absence. Other painters addressed absence similarly: Lucio Fontana, Alberto Burri…

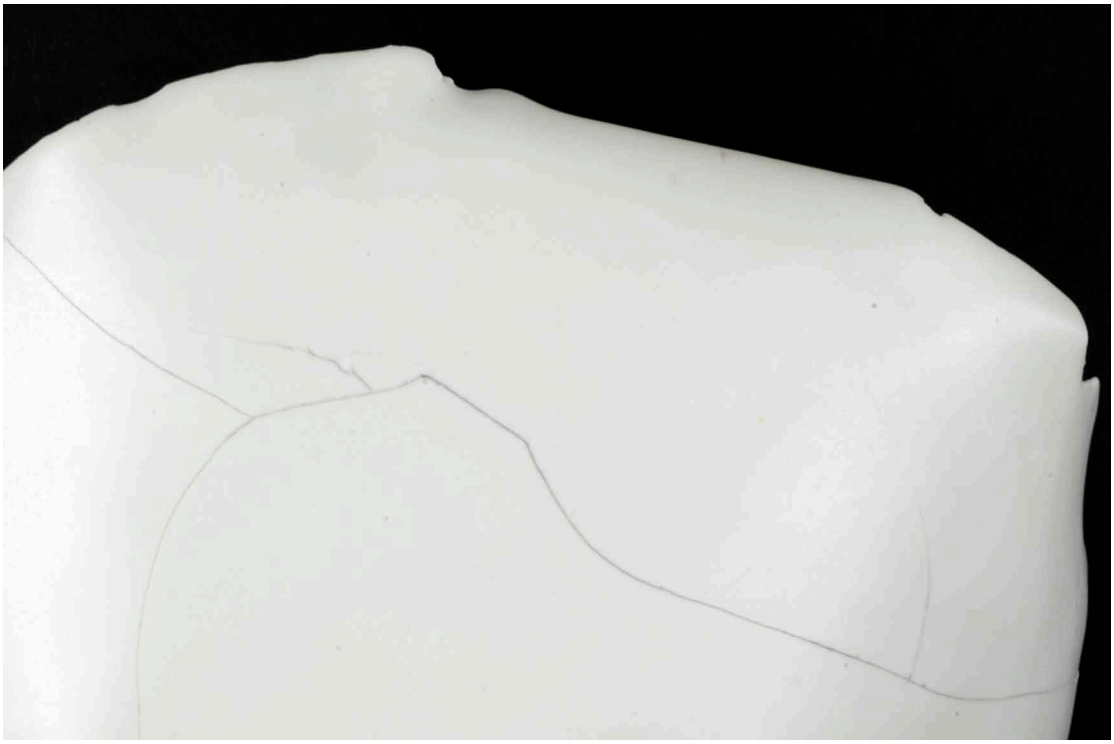
If the unplanned becomes the rule, are accidents still possible or are they integrated within the overall focus on the process? When the first slit happened on one of the flat planes, it was a real surprise, something that I hadn't planned for, nor expected. It was a real accident and I must admit it was a disappointment. I had dreamed of a glazed surface that could lead the viewer to dream poetically about the material. I was left with slits.



I had hoped for substance. Here I was with a void. Where I expected surface, I had a hole, an absence, nothing. The slits did not make sense immediately but they did eventually and I will discuss the slit later in the research. In the later pieces, I accepted them fully. I looked for them, provoked them. Eventually by deciding to make more of the flat pieces, I also decided to make more slits. I never actually made them myself, but I knew they would occur. I could soon foretell where and how the slits would happen so that I started playing with the flow and the gravity of the glaze to let the glaze run into, over or around them. Have therefore the slits become only half an accident? It is tempting to link the issue of control and reproducibility to its legitimacy as a craftwork but this is certainly more difficult for an artwork. Moreover, some amazing glazes in spite of their being documented, often escape control and reproducibility. Surprise is an important element of the poetics of glaze. Shimizu Uichi whose fish-scale glaze triggered this whole research wrote about the fish-scale glaze: “I was amazed by those new pieces, and though

they were mine, they were totally different from what I had forecasted. With this sort of things happening, I could not, would not stop making ceramics" (Uichi, 1996).

But how late can the surprise occur? When is the piece a finished piece? Painters often say, a painting is never finished until it is finished, implying that a painting can always be corrected, amended. Instinctively, one could say it is certainly not the case for ceramics and the glazed ceramic is obviously completed once the kiln has been opened. Truly, accidents happen before this in the previous stages of the making: the pouring of the slab, the turning over of the slab, the modelling of the slab, the construction of the underlying structure, the biscuit firing (where first cracks appear), the polishing (accident-rich), the glazing and eventually the firing. It seems it shall stop at this stage when a piece is ready for display. But is it really so? In some of my glazes much more happens once this has happened: cracks forms and I sometimes colour them at different stages of their occurrence. Some pieces were accidentally broken later, when removing the glaze in excess or while being stored or handled. Some were fixed. On two of them, the lines the repair created on the surface became part of the work.



But a similar attempt to repair failed on other pieces as the breaks did not seem to integrate the work. It was breaks, which seem to remain exterior to the work, which did not integrate it.

The transitional space

The concept of transitional space has surfaced on several occasions in the research. First when developing a classification of glazes, my artistic interest for an ambivalent solid liquidity as expressed in running processes and drips of my glazes has lead me to raise the hypothesis that glaze could be a transitional space in a Winnicottian sense. With Edge, I developed the former hypothesis to tackle the issue of play in my work and pointed out to the transitional character of the installation itself.

Building upon the significance of accidents and surprises in glazes, I would like to develop further the concept of glaze as transitional space. What is at stake in my artistic use of glaze is precisely the transition between the illusion of power and control to the experience of objectivity. The process of glaze is a separation: from an illusory, magical union with the world, I eventually apprentice otherness and objectivity.

For Winnicott, the infant experiences omnipotence, the illusion of magical control (over the mother's breast). The process of disillusionment (weaning) is the discovery of objectivity and separation, and of lack of magical control. The transitional space however is a neutral area of experience, which links the self with the world in ways that are not challenged.

Glaze can be just this transitional space Winnicott writes about, an intermediate area of experience belonging to the realm of illusion and which represents a transition from a state of being merged and in magical control to a state of being in relation to something outside and separate.

The jealous potter of Lévi-Strauss exemplifies precisely that what is at stake in the process of ceramics is a separation.

> Jealousy can be defined either as a feeling emanating from the desire to hold on to something or someone that is being taken away from you or as the desire for something or someone you do not possess. We can say, then, that jealousy tends to support or create a state of

> conjunction whenever there is a state or threat of disjunction (Lévis-Strauss, 1985, p.173).

Jean Girel, a contemporary classical ceramist writes: “Firing is always a separation” (Girel, 2004, p.63).

It is as if ceramics concentrated both the most direct form of expression: modelling the clay (there is no space between the hand and its imprint on the material) and the most distant: the glaze process. Through the immediacy and directness of modelling the clay, the ceramist experiences the illusion of omnipotence and magical control. What follows is a gradual process of disillusionment, an intermediate area between primary creativity and objective perception. But the glaze process itself provides the ceramist with some illusion of control and domination: after all he is turning stones into liquid. But variables are many and complex: The transfer from a test tile to another bigger form or from a form to another often brings the first disappointments and frustrations. Slight variations of materials due to a change of supplier or worse of the mining seam itself can have tremendous consequences on the finished glazes. Materials, which are identical in their chemical formulae can be very different in their nature and their effect on the finished glaze differs dramatically. Further factors can have tremendous consequences too: how the kiln is set up, how kilns differ from each other (not to mention the huge and obvious difference of the combustive used), the weather and its effect on kiln’s drought and of course the human factor, itself a very rich source of mistakes and surprises.

These challenges the firing and the glaze process impose upon the very possibility of control can be ignored, denied and fought against. This is what Lévi-Strauss's jealous potters try vainly to oppose. This is the reason for what Foster described as the forcefully conservatism and reluctance to innovation and change of potters family in Mexico. In China, under Xianzong (1465-1487) the Chenghua emperor's approach to the production of imperial porcelain goods has been described as both extravagant and ruinously expensive. Under his rule, Chinese imperial porcelain is viewed as 'perfect porcelain': "the extent of quality control was such that imperfect imperial porcelains were deliberately smashed […] While such high standards ensured the production of flawless porcelains, they drained the treasury and the next emperor inherited a legacy of depleted funds" (Scott, 1995, p.6).

But what is an alternative to jealousy and conservatism? Can the difficulty or the impossibility of control imply blind acceptation, renunciation, passive acceptance, fatalism, lack of demand, self or object-indulgence and the impossibility of progress, be it scientific, technical or even artistic?

There are risks.

"Should an adult make claims on us for our acceptance of the objectivity of his subjective phenomena we discern or diagnose madness" (Winnicott, 1971, p.18).

Should an adult make claims on us for our acceptance of the subjectivity of an objective phenomena we discern or diagnose deception and fraud.

Probably, transitional is a misleading term as it implies it is only a moment between two stages. Probably its reality is far more complex and fluctuating. It is more akin to a never-ending process than to a completed evolution. It is a process, which vacillates between subjectivity and objectivity, illusion and withdrawal, fusion and separation, its completion and its start. And Winnicott insists that “the task of reality-acceptance is never completed, that no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and that the relief from this strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience which is not challenged (arts, religion, etc.)” (Winnicott, 1971, p.18).

This state of flux opens the possibility of play. Play in one of its acceptation defines a free or unimpeded motion (as of a part of a machine). It is precisely because the terms are not set that play can occur.

The process of glaze, as a transitional area between subjectivity and objectivity, the made and the born, art and material, control and accident allows play such a central role. But if one of the elements becomes dominant it prevents the very possibility of play and its grace, its poetic character, is precisely the tension and the difficult balance between the two.

In the latest flat pieces, the slits – a clear symbol of separation and disjunction - have never been designed, drawn or made. They occur. They first appear as a very thin line after the pieces have been biscuit fired. Yet those lines do not always mean they will turn into slits. So I began to play with them by tilting the shelves on which they would be glaze fired, hoping for wonders. What the play between glaze, slits and gravity eventually entails is always uncertain. For me the slits are an element of play before they are a symbol of separation. Among the slit pieces, some completely broke. Also, I broke a number of them while handling them. I tried to recompose some of those by sticking them together on an acrylic base. When they are not lines but slits there is no possibility for a drawing. They remain slits. And when the slit is a break that is when the play ended with one element completely superseding the other I am afraid the piece loses its poetic tension. It ceases to be a transitional space. It is resolved and unambiguous.

It is important to stress that the slits were not only an accidental material occurrence, as I did break some of the pieces by way of ‘clumsiness’. Even the slits quite authentically material-driven became partly artist-driven once I decided to risk similar slit again. The desire to play is an important element behind those slits but it is difficult to admit any attempt at playing in the clumsy accidents I produced while handling the pieces. I have to confess a profound pain and a tremendous disappointment when those occurred.

Psychoanalysis could probably help to find some meaning in even so trivial a parapraxis as the breaking of an object. “Dropping, knocking over and

breaking objects are acts which seem to be used very often to express unconscious trains of thought, as analysis can occasionally demonstrate […] (Freud, 1901, p.227). Trauma, grief, loss, attachment, separation are some of the likely findings. The insight from Freud is that the difference between unconscious experience and conscious life is made most evident in trauma, when we see the unknown depth of the self through a mistake, a wound, an error. The latter are feared not only because they are simply different from accepted conventions but because they are a portal into that other logic of the unconscious.

Importantly “individual clumsy actions do not by any means always have the same meaning, but serve as a method of representing one purpose or another according to circumstances” (Freud, 1901, p.227).

But the slit is also an opening into the void. Before the slits, at the very start of this research, the void was already an important element of my artistic practice. What is the void within my own practice? Following this investigation, I will further analyse the work carried out at during the research.

Shaping the Void

The concept of the void is multifold. It covers aspects of physics, philosophy, religion and aesthetics. It is addressed by various artists within the fine-arts. In ceramics, it is a central operating concept as the inner space of vessels is an essential functional concern of pottery making.

The concept of void has been attended from the beginning by several conceptual difficulties.

In Greek philosophy, the atomists admitted only two first principles: “Being”, which were the material atoms and “Not-being,” identified with the void. Void was utterly without qualities or powers of any kind and, indeed, almost illusory (Hesse 1972, p.217).

In terms of physics, the void is the interval between two objects.

Another more radical definition is that of an absolutely empty or unfilled space. The latter definition can be seen as a twofold paradoxical concept. First this definition supposes the existence of nothing, as nothing is precisely what there is in empty space. So is it still nothing? Further, this definition of the void also supposes a space containing it and by doing so it sets the existence of its very opposite, bringing us back to the initial definition of the interval.

Others problems arise from trying to conceive of the passage of force and information through a vacuum. In modern quantum mechanics, the void is never void and space is not empty, but seething with latent or virtual particles (Cassé, 2001).

If then the physical void is impossible, we are left only with the possibility of the void as a concept and artistic attempts at working with the void can only deal with the interval as a symbol and metaphor of an idealized void. Another direct implication of the paradoxical nature of the definition for any artistic concern with the void is the ambivalence and ambiguity of existence and perception thus leading us again towards the illusory.

According to the French poet and philosopher François Cheng, the Chinese Tao philosophy perceives three main breaths: the yin, the yang and the median void (Cheng, 2004). The median void allows to go beyond the binary opposition of the two great forces by focusing on the interplay and the interval between them. It is a philosophy of inter-relating and the void makes the encounter possible. The praise of blandness and decorative void in Chinese Song dynasty aesthetics stems from this same concept of median void. In spite of its apparent negativity, blandness is seen as mainly positive in Chinese aesthetics and ethic (Jullien, 1991). Because of its very void and lack of self-assertion, blandness is neutral and allows to be filled in. This definition of the void is quite different from the former definition from the field of physics as it now provides a unity and homogeneity of the primary elements and avoids discreteness and discontinuity. However the initial opposition and ambiguity remain as unity is not uniformity.

Conceptually this is also close to Merleau-Ponty's concept of inter-twining and chiasm. A chiasm is an intersection or crossing of two tracts in the form of the letter X:

> Any absolute distinction between being in the world as touching, and being in the world as touched, deprives the existential phenomena of their true complexity. Our embodied subjectivity is never located purely in either our tangibility or in our touching, but in the intertwining of these two aspects, or where the two lines of a chiasm intersect with one another. The chiasm then, is simply an image to describe how this overlapping and encroachment can take place between a pair that nevertheless retains a divergence, in that touching and touched are obviously never exactly the same thing. (Reynolds, [no date])

The concern with the void can therefore also imply a concern with inter-relating.

In Buddhism, the void is known as Śūnyatā, the nonexistence of the elements of things and of the self. It is the ultimate truth devoid of distinguishing characteristics, beyond being and non-being. Ś ūnyatā also signifies that everything is inter-related, never self-sufficient or independent; nothing has independent reality. Yet Ś ūnyatā never connotes nihilism but rather an ultimate state of wisdom and happiness culminating in the absence of self.

A further relevant aspect of the void is its understanding as gravitational concept: jumping or falling into the void from a great height or a cliff. In terms of definition it is only an application of the physical one. However it is

symbolically important as it associates the void with vertigo (the attraction for the void), fall, possibly death but also freedom or liberation.

The latter remark raises the question of values underlying the concept of the void. From a western point of view, the void first appears a negative concept: wanting, devoid, foolish, worthless, vain, useless, lack, absence, null… On the opposite, from an oriental viewpoint it is a highly positive term. In the West, there is a positive reading of the void as it can be understood as a promise of fulfillment or a potentiality for the new.

In the world of fine art, the concept of the void has been used by many artists and their concerns clearly reflect some of the aspects outlined in the definitions above.

- Most Chinese Song dynasty art works (painting, music and ceramics) reflect the requirements for blandness set by Chinese scholars.
- Yves Klein, nicknamed the Conquistador of the Void, realized various public displays of the void creating an extreme form of art that aimed to evoke a rich sensory experience.
- Bob Law's best known works are the large paintings and drawings where the surface is presented either fully loaded with colour (usually black) or empty and circumscribed by a line. Critics saw his black pictures as a kind of receptacle for the viewer as they appear to contain only black pigment. Further, through this paintings, Bob Law has been concerned with establishing his own sense of existence questioning how we can record visually what we sense.

- Like Yves Klein and Bob Law, Anish Kapoor's works generate an immersive experience which elicits powerful physical and psychological responses. Anish Kapoor's sculptures relate to the void in several ways. The concept of the void is often the very object of its sculptures: creating the illusion of void, making it spectacular. But Kapoor also encompasses nuances and subtleties of the void's definitions such as metaphysical dualities - the play of opposing concepts like presence and absence, inside and outside, positive and negative. He is also concerned with inter-relating as his pieces are disembodied to focus on their inter-relating with the viewer. They are as much an object as a set of relations. The concept of the self-born vs. the constructed in Kapoor's work relates to both Tao aesthetics and idea of nature and Buddhism's Śūnyatā.

In ceramics, the void is a key component in the form of all vessels. As Martin Heidegger wrote about a jug though it could be any sort of container or vessel: "The empty space, this nothing of the jug is what the jug is as the holding jug. And if the holding is done by the jug's void, then the potter shapes the void" (Heidegger, 1971, p.169). While carving and modelling generally strive to fashion what is solid, by its very nature the vessel has to deal with the void, which both informs it and gives it much of its life. Carving and modelling are inverted vessels. In architectural ceramics, the vessel and the void are also often present: a clay slab, a panel or a wall whose two ends meet becomes a vessel as well. The vessel seems to be a permanent feature of most ceramic works as it is almost a technical constraint of clay to dry evenly.

Further, Heidegger also sees the jug's jug character in the exchange and the gift. "The gift gathers what belongs to giving: the twofold containing, the container, the void and the outpouring as donation" (ibid. p.173-174). Here again the void implies the interval and inter-relating. Vessels are the vehicle of exchange. They are pieces designed for giving and receiving. It transcends time, culture and society.

Vessels relate. Symbolically, the vessel is part of a common language. Forms and usages are known and shared. The choice of a common language is the choice of interrelation.

At the same time, the vessel being such a common and ordinary form is initially devoid of artistic meaning. Appreciation of art works is not a matter of ignorance, knowledge is often a pre-requisite to appreciation and understanding, but this can often involve social distinction and mimesis (Bourdieu, 1979), and art works are often seen with the ears. The vessel's lack of artistic culture could allow for its immediate and authentic appreciation as an art form?

Before embarking on this research, as a ceramicist, I was committed to investigating the aesthetic of the vessel. The vessel is a traditional and important concern within ceramics. The void is one of its distinctive features. But is the void identical in all vessels? What is the void in my vessels? Most forms I had been making were a variation of the disc form, with vertical walls never exceeding a few centimetres: hollow, topless drums. The void of a bowl

might extend in a cone-like shape to the space around. The extension of a drum's void is different and does not so much relate to the outside space than to the space beyond it and within it. The void of a drum is both a space of interiority (the space contained within its walls) and a space beyond (the space beyond its base).

In the first series of the illusory objects, I developed vessels with a concern for perception and illusion of the inner space. Some of those forms raised the question of the inner void by changing the positioning or/and shape of the inside of the vessels. To that end I altered the inside or void of the vessel, filling it to various extents. However, the filling is not a solid negating the void but a way to alter it and question the way we perceive it and the contrast between reality and illusion.

By filling the void of the vessels, I created an interior space and stressed what eventually became an important element of the research: the concern for interiority.

The concern for interiority is a defining feature of the poetic.

But the concern for interiority is also entailed and rooted in the vessel. The void of the vessel is its interiority. In 'The Jealous Potter' Lévi-Strauss eventually demonstrates that the ceramic vessel partakes to a dialectic of internality and externality, content and container, and Lévi-Strauss points out that the myths of American Indians that deals with the creation of pottery are

all akin to a Klein's bottle. In pointing out this dialectic of internality and externality, subjectivity and objectivity, Lévi-Strauss only corroborates the connection I established between ceramics, the process of glaze and Winnicott's transitional space.

I may have abandoned the aesthetic of the vessel in the research, but what I believe is one of its most essential feature: a concern for interiority, never left my work and it remained as an underlying concern.

Following the work on the illusory-drums, I moved away from the potter's wheel to investigate the technique of building with slabs. The first series of slab-objects retained an important feature from the previous drums as the visible base of the pieces was often higher than its actual base. Moreover, I first resorted to a system of underlying walls to sustain those false bases and I became intrigued and drawn by the way they showed subtly under the surface. In the tall pieces where the base was not visible, I developed a similar system of underlying wall structure, which showed with subtlety under the glazed surface.

The enclosed pieces that followed are a development of this first attempt. In those however, the void seems to have completely disappeared. But I believe the void remains a possibility. The pieces are ambiguous. They seem they could be solid, but the structure underneath probably hints at the void without which it would be very hard to have any kind of movement or dynamic. The void is not seen but it is understood. If it is not void, it is some sort of content

distinct from what they are made of and which endows them with the status of a container. The model for the cobblestones is one of those enclosed pieces. It too seems solid, probably even more confusingly so: the glaze is a mineral and it covers what seems a stone. But the ridge on the top face is hinting at an underlying activity, which supposes some void or at least some malleability.

But the issue of content and container raises some difficulties for the domestic objects. The initial concept seemed somehow similar to the whole process of enclosed and underlying structures. After carefully choosing a ‘found object’, I covered it and concealed it with clay. The resulting object would then be moulded and multiples cast. Surprisingly to me what emerged from the domestic objects seems at odds with the traditional concerns of the vessel and they do not seem to partake to this dialectic of interiority and exteriority.

What are they then? I believe what differentiates the domestic objects from the previous series of work is that they do not cease to be the objects they try to conceal. They are strangely sculptural and seem to be inhabited by the objects they have been made with, as if they were still inside. It is like a shell, a cast of pompeii. The possibility of the void, of interiority is denied. The glaze seems strangely superficial, a decorative element of sorts, a coat or a layer over a support. The glaze has become a barrier, not a gate. It does not allow permeability or penetration. Access to interiority is denied.

With the domestic objects it becomes clear that the glaze alone is not what permits a journey into the glaze. The support is key in partaking to the dialectic of interiority and exteriority, content and container. This dialectic is obviously at work in the vessel, but in my research I wish to create and investigate new forms through which it can be achieved.
I believe this was one of my objectives when developing the last series of objects: the planes, which followed Edge and the domestic objects in the last year of the research.

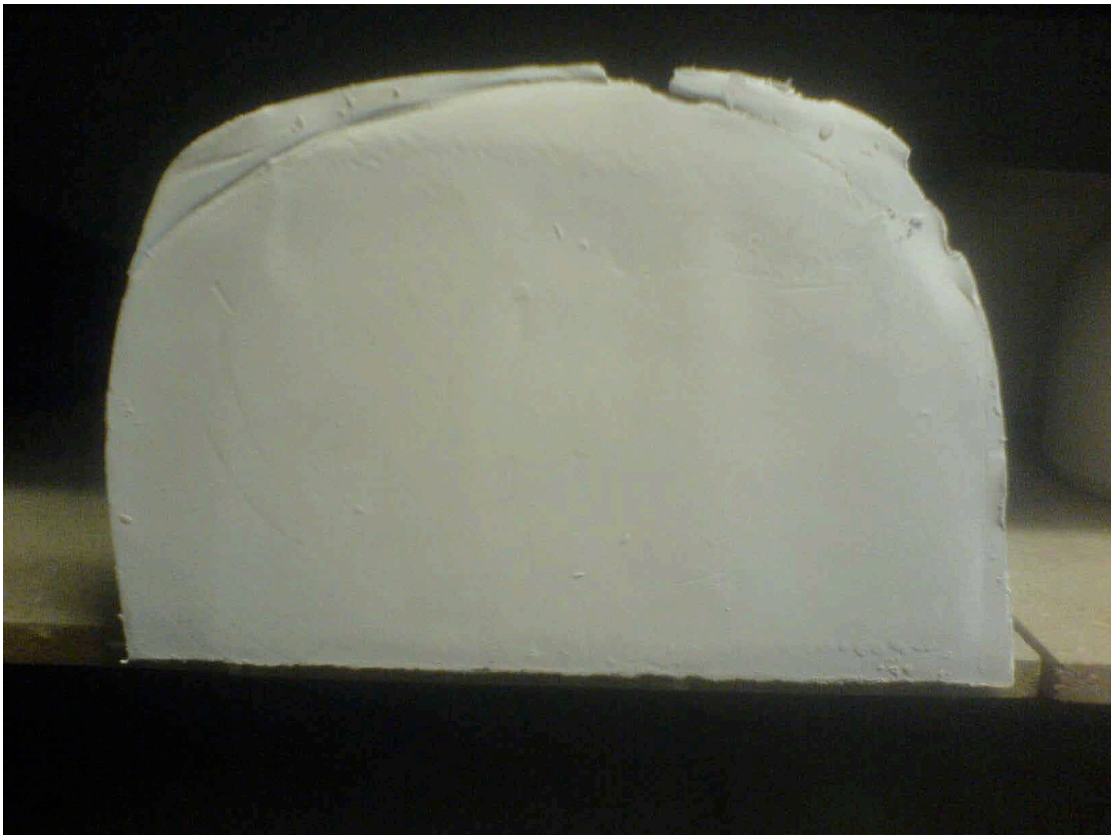
I confess a certain frustration with Edge and the domestic objects: a feeling of incompleteness and failure. One of the elements of my frustration was the incapacity to enter the objects. Objects remained what they were and did not allow this crucial dynamic between fusion and distance, which is a key to the transitional phenomena. With Edge the pieces seem to have moved permanently into the realm of objecthood.

I recall that when my mind started to dream about the pieces that would follow Edge and first envisioned other objects to be concealed with clay, it suddenly stopped when it became obvious the forms thus created would never allow immersion.

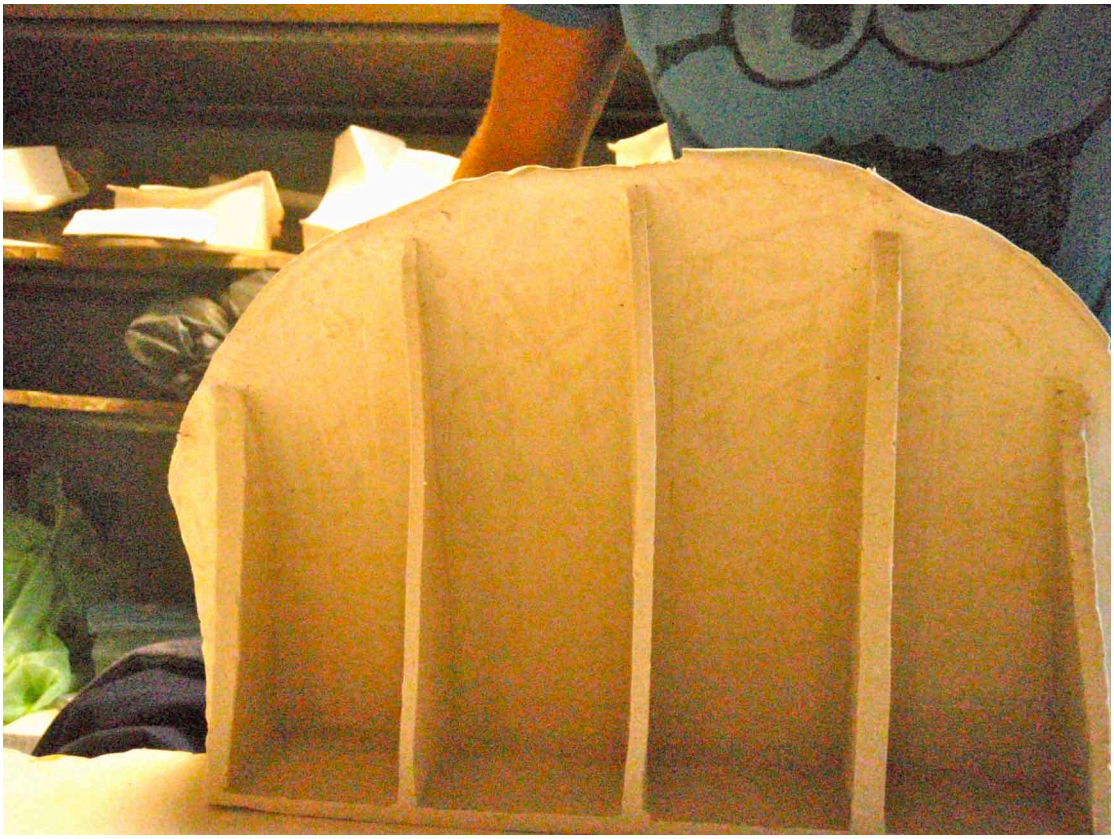
I embarked on a different body of work and tackled the plane.

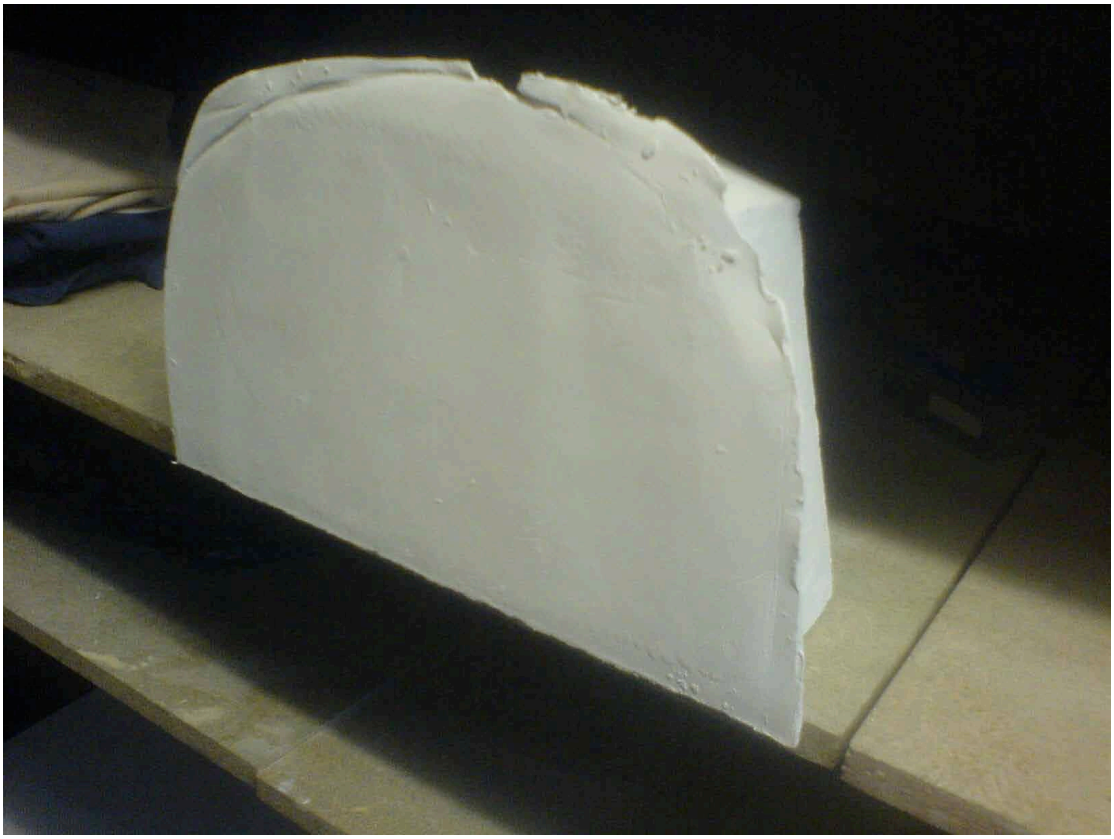
While making the enclosed pieces of Edge, I had saved some scrapings left over from the making and which had won my attention: a mark, a curve, a

fold, a form, which I thought were of interest. I wasn't sure what to do with them yet. Those too were found objects. I decided to mount them, like a stone on a ring. They were to be shown, looked at.



I created a base. The base was similar to an enclosed form except it wasn't closed. I had first imagined those planes to sit on a shelf, close to the wall with the opened element of the base facing the wall. Importantly this first series of pieces was not made with a view to become wall pieces.





Throughout the whole series of planes I created volume through playing with the position of the plane to create spatial depth by adding a third dimension: bending it, curving it, folding it, tilting it, wrapping it, supporting it with foam, or joining it with another plane.

Curved

Two planes joined

Ibid.

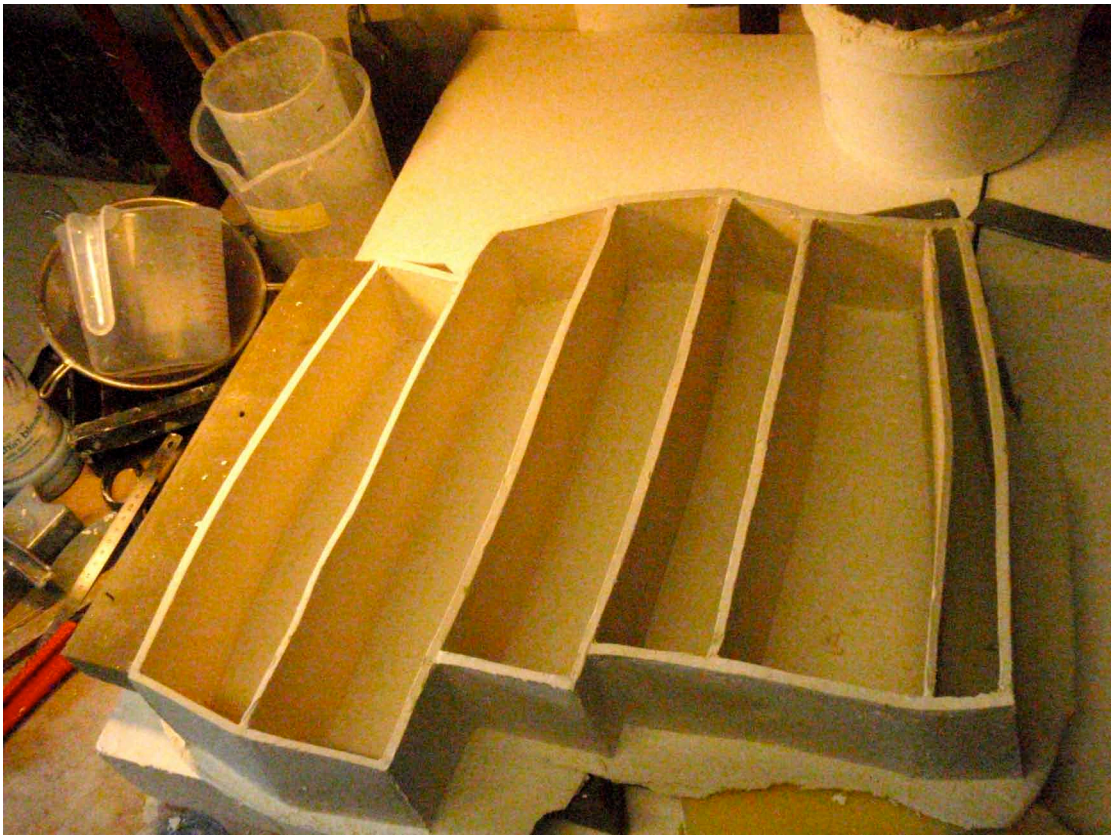
Covering/concealing/molding

Folded

Concave-Convex

Concave

From the start, the underlying structure was an important element of volume creation.



This structure has remained a feature of those plane pieces throughout. It is a support, a setting, a prop but it goes beyond being a mere practicality and it relates importantly to the plane it supports. It shows under the surface and on some pieces, the base merges at times with the slab sheet to create an enclosed volume on the one side while leaving the other side a floating plane. The works alternate between painting and ceramic vessel, plane and volume. Vessel paintings?

The plane sticks out

Part of the plane sticks out, part of the plane is merged to create a volume

Ibid.

This ambiguity, this duality is an important element of this series. It seems depth is to be found on the surface: externality. “The deep becomes a secret absolutely superficial […] depth is nothing but a game, just a fold on a surface” (Foucault, 1980). But in those pieces depth remains inseparable from the volume and the substance of internality. In some of those pieces, the base has been removed after firing.

Hollow

If the absence of the base renders the object quite mysterious it is because what should be there is not as if it had become invisible. Yet it is present, even only as an imprint.

The ceramic vessel's dialectic of exteriority and interiority is at play. Again. The concept coined by Walter Benjamin of 'dialectic images' by which he described the simultaneity of past and present could be applied for those plane pieces: they are dialectic. This is only how far we will follow Benjamin who further conceived of dialectic at a standstill. In the series of the plane objects the dialectic is at play. It never ceases to be operational. It is never resolved: dialectic in the making.

Surface and depth. Plane and Volume. Void and substance.

Equally ambiguous and indecisive is the position of those pieces in space. First, they were not meant initially to be wall pieces. This only became a possibility afterwards. Retrospectively I devised a system of displaying those pieces equally off the wall: the fired porcelain was drilled and a picture hanging wire attached through. The hanging system was included at modelling stage from only the third series of the planes onwards. Truly, some of the pieces, especially the flat ones, seem unequivocally wall pieces but many can still be displayed both frontally and spatially.

Within this reflecting over the dialectic of interiority and exteriority the cracks can be viewed with different meanings or purpose. Psychoanalysis hails trauma as an opening into the depths of the self.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abellan, Jose Luis (1979) La Filosofia de Antonio Marchado y su Teoria de la Apocrifo. *El Basilisco*, número 7, mayo-junio 1979, p.77-83.

Albis Jean d' (1976) *Un Céramiste Art Nouveau: Ernest Chaplet, 1835-1909*. Livre Catalogue de l'Exposition au Musée des Arts Décoratifs en 1976, Paris: Les presses de la connaissance.

Audouin, Philippe (1964), '1964' in: Alleau, René (1964) *Dictionnaire des Jeux*, Paris: Réalités de l'Imaginaire Tchou, p.481-2.

Bachelard, Gaston [1938a] (1987) *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, trans. Ross, Alan C.M., London: Quartet Books.

Bachelard, Gaston (1938b) *La Formation de l'Esprit Scientifique: Contribution à une Psychanalyse de la Connaissance Objective*, Paris: Vrin.

Bachelard, Gaston [1942] (1983) *Water and Dreams* trans. Farrell, Edith R., Dallas: The Pegasus Foundation.

Bachelard, Gaston (1943) *L'Air et les Songes: Essai sur l'Imagination des Forces,* Paris: José Corti.

Bachelard, Gaston (1961) *La Poétique de la Rêverie*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Bachelard, Gaston (1987b) *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie. Selections from Gaston Bachelard*, trans. Gaudin, Colette, Dallas: Spring Publications.

Bancquart, Marie-Claire (1996) *La Poésie en France du Surréalisme à Nos Jours*, Paris: Ellipses.

Barthes, Roland (1975) *The Pleasure of the Text*, translated Gill, Gillian C., Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Bauman, Zygmunt (2005), *Liquid Life*, Oxford/Cambridge: Polity.

Blanc, C. (1882) *Grammaire des Arts Décoratifs*, Paris: Librairie Renouard.

Bourdieu, P. (1979) *La Distinction. Critique Sociale du Jugement*, Paris: Editions de Minuit.

Bourriaud, Nicolas (2009a) *The Radicant*, trans. Gussen, James and Porten, Lili, New York: Lukas & Sternberg.

Bourriaud, Nicolas (2009b) 'Precarious Constructions', *Open* – 2009/No.17:20-39. Rotterdam: NAI Publishers SKOR.

Breton, André [1924] (1985) *Manifestes du Surréalisme*, Paris: Gallimard.

Breton, André [1937] (1987) *Mad Love*, trans. Caws, Mary Ann, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Caillois, Roger (1967) *Les Jeux et les Hommes*, Paris: Gallimard.

Caillois, Roger (1978) Approches de la poésie, Paris: Editions Gallimard.

Caillois, Roger (2003), edited and transl. by Frank, Claudine, *The Edge of Surrealism. A Roger Caillois Reader*, Durham: Duke University Press.

Cassé, M. (2001) *Le Vide et la Création*, Paris: Odile Jacob.

Char, René (1936) *Moulin premier*, Paris: G.L.M.

Char, René (1948) *Fureur et Mystère*, Paris: G.L.M.

Char, René (1974) *Sur la Poésie - 1936-1974*, Paris: GLM.

Cheng, F. (2004) *Le Livre du Vide Médian*, Paris: Albin Michel.

Clemenceau, Georges (1928) *Claude Monnet: Les Nymphéas*, Paris: Plon.

Collins, Jeff (1996) *Introducing Derrida*, Cambridge: Icon Books.

Collot, Michel (1997) *La matière-émotion*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Cooper, Emmanuel and Royle, Derek (1978) *Glazes for the Studio Potter*, London: B T Batsford.

Dean, Carolyn J. (1992) *The Self and its Pleasures. Bataille, Lacan, and the History of the Decentered Subject*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Debrus, Gilles (2006) *Les Nymphéas, le Grand Rêve de Monnet*, Paris: SCEREN-CNDP.

Deleuze, Gilles (1962) *Nietzsche et la Philosophie*, Paris: Quadrige/Presses Universitaires de France.

Derrida, Jacques (1994) *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Kamuf, Peggy, New York: Routledge.

Didi-Huberman, Georges (1995) *La Ressemblance Informe ou le Gai Savoir Visuel Selon Georges Bataille*, Paris: Macula.

Encyclopaedia Britannica (1969), Chicago: William Benton, Publisher.

Entrecolles, François Xavier d' (1722) in Burton, William (1906) Porcelain, Its Art and Manufacture, London: B.T. Batsford.

Fineman, M. (2004) 'The Cypress in the Orchard' in: Hirshorn Museum and Sculpture Garden et al., (eds), *Gabriel Orozco. Photographs*, Göttingen: Steidl, pp. 15-25.

Foucault, Michel (1967) *Nietzsche, Freud, Marx*, Cahiers de Royaumont, Paris: Editions de Minuit.

Fraser, Harry (1973) *Glazes for the Craft Potter*, London: A&C Black.

Fraser, Harry (1986) *Ceramic Faults and Their Remedies*, London: A&C Black.

Freud, Sigmund [1901] (1975) *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life,* London: Penguin Books.

Freud, Sigmund [1905] (1976) *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, The Penguin Freud Library, vol. 6, ed. A. Richards, London: Penguin Books. p.9-15.

Gaudin, Colette (1987) 'Introduction' in: *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie. Selections from Gaston Bachelard*, trans. Gaudin, Colette, Dallas: Spring Publications, pp. xxxi-lix.

Girel, Jean (2004) *La Sagesse du Potier*, Paris: L'Oeil Neuf Editions.

Goncourt, Edmond de (1881) *La Maison d'un Artiste*, Paris: G. Charpentier.

Gooding, Mel (1995) editor, *A Book of Surrealist Games*, Boston: Shambala, [online] available from:
http://www.shambhala.com/html/catalog/items/isbn/978-1-57062-084-3.cfm?selectedText=EXCERPT_CHAPTER
[accessed 26 September 2011].

Greenberg, C. (1960) 'Modernist Painting' in *Clement Greenberg* [online] available from:
http://www.sharecom.ca/greenberg/modernism.html
[accessed 24 January 2007].

Hamer, Frank and Janet (1997) *The Potter's Dictionary of Materials and Techniques*, 4th edition, 1st edition 1975, London: A&C Black.

Heidegger, M. [1951] (1971) 'The Thing' in: *Poetry, Language, Thought,* trans. Hofstadter, A., New York: Harper & Row.

Hesse, M. (1967) 'Vacuum and Void' in: *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* ed. Edwards, P., New York and London: Macmillan.

Huizinga, Johan [1938] (1955) *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, Boston: Beacon Press.

Jacquemart, Albert (1883) *Les Merveilles de la Céramique*, Paris: Librairie Hachette.

Judd, Donald (2005) *Complete Writings 1959-1975*, Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

Jullien, F. (1991) *Eloge de la Fadeur*, Paris: Philippe Picquier.

Kerl, Bruno (1907) *Handbuch der Gesammten Thonwarenindustrie*, Braunschweig: Vieweg.

Klein, Yves (1983) 'Untitled Statement' in: Art in America, 9 October 1983, pp. 123-124.

Kleist, H. von [1810] (1982) 'On the Puppet Theater' in *An Abyss Deep Enough: Letters of Heinrich von Kleist with a Selection of Essays and Anecdotes*, ed. and trans. Miller, P.B., New York: Dutton, pp. 211-216.

Koren, L. (1994) *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers*, Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press.

Krauss, Rosalind E. (1997) *Formless. A User's Guide*, NY: Zone Books.

Krauss, Rosalind E. (1993) *The Optical Unconscious*, Cambridge, Massachussets: The MIT Press.

Kristeva, Julia (1974) *La Révolution du Langage Poétique*, Paris: Editions du Seuil.

Kristeva, Julia [1974] (1984) *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Waller, Margaret, New York: Columbia University Press.

Lacan, Jacques [1964] (1973) *Les Quatre Concepts Fondamentaux de la Psychanalyse*, Le Séminaire, Livre XI, Paris: Editions du Seuil.

Lacan, Jacques [1964] (1977) *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* – (The international psycho-analytical library; no. 106), trans. Sheridan, Alan, London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis.

Laxton, Susan J. (2003) 'The Guarantor of Chance: Surrealism's Ludic Practices' in: Papers of Surrealism Issue I, Winter 2003 [online] available from: http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/publications/papers/ [accessed 16 January 2007].

Leach, B. (1940) *A Potter's Book*, London: Faber and Faber.

Leach, B. (1972) 'Introduction' in: *The Unknown Craftsman* Yanagi S. trans. Leach, B., Tokyo: Kodansha International, p.87-100.

Leitch, Vincent B., general editor (2001) *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Leiter, B.R. [n.d.] *The Hermeneutics of Suspicion: Recovering Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud* in: University of Texas Law, Public Law Research Paper No. 72 [online] available from:
http://ssrn.com/abstract=691002
[accessed 16 January 2007].

Lévi-Strauss, C. [1985] (1988) The Jealous Potter, trans. Chorier, B., Chicago:The University of Chicago Press.

Macey, David (2000) *Dictionary of Critical Theory*, London: Penguin Books.

Mallarmé, Stéphane and Huret, Jules (1891) 'Interview with Stéphane Mallarmé' in: Dorra, Henri (1994) *Symbolist Art Theories. A Critical Anthology*, Berkeley: University of California Press, p.139-142.

Maritain, Jacques (1953) *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*, New York: Bollingen Foundation.

Medley, M. (1976) *The Chinese Potter. A Practical History of Chinese Ceramics*, Oxford: Phaidon.

Meschonnic, Henri (2001) *Célébration de la Poésie*, Paris: Editions Verdier.

Mill, John Stuart (1833) 'Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties' in: The Monthly Repository, January and October 1833 [online] available from: http://laits.utexas.edu/poltheory/jsmill/diss-disc/poetry/poetry.s01.html
[Accessed 26 September 2011]

Nietzsche, Friedrich [1872] (1967) *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans Kaufmann, W., New York: Vintage.

Parmelee, Cullen W. (1973) *Ceramic Glazes*, Boston: Cahners Books.

Paz, Octavio [1956] (1973), *The Bow and the Lyre*, trans. Ruth L. C. Simms, New York: Mc Graw Hill.

Paz, Octavio (1976) *The Siren and the Seashell, and Other Essays on Poets and Poetry*, trans. Kemp, L. & Seyers Peden, M., Austin: University of Texas Press.

Pendleton-Julian, Ann M. (1996) *The Road That Is Not a Road and the Open City, Ritoque, Chile*, Cambridge, Massachussets: The MIT Press.

Pérez-Gómez, Alberto (2006) *Built upon Love*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Plato [c. 390 B.C.E.] (2001) 'Ion', in: Leitch, Vincent B., general editor The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism, New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Poulet, Marcel (2008) *La Grande Aventure des Grès Flammés 1900-1950 en Puisaye et Ailleurs*, Les Cahiers du Grès de Puisaye N°4, 2008, Merry-la-Vallée: Marcel Poulet.

Read, Herbert [1932] (1989) *Form in Modern Poetry*, Plymouth: Vision Press.

Reynolds, J. [n.d.] 'Maurice Merleau Ponty' [online] in: *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, available from: http://www.iep.utm.edu/m/merleau.html [accessed 24 January 2007].

Ribault, P. (2009) *Pour une Ontologie du Geste. A Notre Corps Défaillant*, Thesis (Doctorat Art, Esthétique et Sciences de l'art), Université Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne.

Richard, Jean-Pierre (1955) *Poésie et Profondeur*, Paris: Editions du Seuil.

Richards, Mary Caroline (1964) *Centering in Pottery, Poetry and the Person*, Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.

Rimbaud, Arthur [1871] (1984) *Poésies*, Paris: Gallimard. Translation [online] available from: http://www.milkmag.org/drunkenboat2.htm JN Reilly [accessed 24 April 2009].

Rose, Barbara (2006) *Monochromes from Malevich to the Present*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Roudiez, Leon S. (1984) 'Introduction' in: Kristeva, Julia, transl. Waller, Margaret, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Saussure, Ferdinand de [1913] (1995) *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, Paris: Payot/

Shelley, Percy Bysshe (1821) [1840], *A Defence of Poetry* [online] available from: http://www.thomaslovepeacock.net/defence.html [accessed 24 January 2007].

Shotton, Elizabeth (2007) 'Material Imprecision' in: *Material Matters. Architecture and Material Practice*, ed. Lloyd Thomas, Katie, London: Routledge, pp. 91-102.

Singer, Felix and German W.L. (1960) *Ceramic Glazes*, London: Borax.

Smithson, Alison and Peter (undated, unedited notes, ca. 1953) 'As Found', in: Lichtenstein, Claude (ed.) (2001) *As Found: the Discovery of the Ordinary*, Baden: Lars Müller.

Tanizaki, Junichiro [1933] (1977) *In Praise of Shadows*, trans. Harper, Thomas J., New Haven, CT: Leete's Island Books.

Tapié, Michel (1952) *Un Art Autre Où Il S'Agit de Nouveaux Dévidages du Réel*, Paris: Gabriel-Giraud et fils.

Taylor, Victor E. and Winquist, Charles E., Editors (2001), *Encyclopaedia of Postmodernism*, London: Routledge.

The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (1971), Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Valéry, Paul (1957) *Oeuvres 1*, Paris: Gallimard, Editions de La Pléiade

Vandiver, Pamela B. and Kingery, David W. (1985) 'Variations in the microstructure and microcomposition of pre-Song, Song, and Yuan dynasty ceramics', in: Kingery, David W. (ed) *Ceramics and Civilization – Volume I: Ancient Technology to Modern Science*, Columbus: American Ceramic Society.

Vandiver, Pamela B. (1990) 'Ancient Glazes', in: Scientific American, April 1990, Volume 262 (4), 80-87.

Winnicott, Donald W. (1953) 'Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena' in: *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 34:89-97.

Winnicott, Donald W. (1967) 'The location of Cultural Experience', in: *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 48:368-372.

Winnicott, D.W. (1971) 'Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena' in *Playing and Reality*, London: Tavistock Publications.

Winter, J. (1999) *Giordano Bruno, Eine Einführung*, Düsseldorf: Parerga.

Winter, J. (2005) "Embracing Emptiness", *Ceramics Magazine*, 27 (6), December/January, pp.28-33.

Wood, Nigel (1999) *Chinese Glazes*, London: A&C Black.

Yanagi, S. (1972) *The Unknown Craftsman* trans. Leach, B., Tokyo: Kodansha International.